

Title Page
24 June 2019 10:00am

The Dark Lords of The Sea

*“Tales of pirates, brash and bolde
and of treasures at the fathoms deep
of rubies and of golde!”*

As Retold by
Mary Seacross

To The One and Only

*“To the Captain on the bottle,
Who made folks want to drink
Of pirates!”*

Edit Log:

23 June 2019 Adding Title Pages for the Internet Archive to upload

16 Jun 2019 after first toe surgery.

13 jan 13:30/ 11 Jan 2019 1355 pm/ 9 Jan 1300pm/ 8 jan 19 1120am / 7 Jan 19 / 6 Jan 2019 / 16 nov 2018, Nov 15 2018

Opened it: Monday, September 10, 2018 8/11/2018 opened it

6/21/18 decision to edit backwards to prevent me from my runaway reading or page-turnability which is a good thing but I need to work on editing)

6/20/18 , 6/19/2018 5/15/18 opened During Lazer Peels timeframe

10/20/17 10/6/17

10/1/17 did my daily commute (lol) and work on it. Create strong work ethic.

I came upon the wrecked bow of tallship once upon a beach. It was a stout, dark tomb-stone-like thing, out of place upon a marsh-island made only of sand and reeds. The surf was roaring before it and I realized as I stood there gazing at it that it had just been freshly unearthed by a powerful Nor'Easter the night before off the Outer Banks of North Carolina, the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." I was probably one of the first to see it in hundreds of years, and as I touched it and wondered of the men and their treasures of stories laden there within it!

And then I found this one.

Introduction

Only for a few, even rare, select times in the history of man upwells a great current of wealth and opportunity flowing from the ancient world to the modern. This river, nay, this Gulf Stream of gold that had once flowed from The New World to Europe – if you had the brazen courage to sail on that treachery of bloody waters, set forth a long chain of nations and Sea warriors who would fight for that right for the Americas gold, who would spare nothing in their conquest. There were no rules nor Maritime law, but a like the later American Wild West, The Vikings or even the Monghols it was a time when their were no rules nor rulers and a man did and took what he wanted under the 'protection of only ones courage' and the pirates ruled the seas, their home, their bread and their fortune a kind of wonder upon the great waters. A kind of lore sprung up about them: What was it like to be

So ruleless
So countryless
So wild and free
And,
So beyond us?

What was that Pirate Captain like, who had so amazed the known world? Was he a mere mortal lifted up by this extraordinary current of gold? Or was he a man that could tame and steer that current towards the rable fleet? And, so what would happen to a man, like that, who'd so souped on blood and gold? Could or would he come back to the regular world to enjoy such riches or was he ever bound to the outlying civilization - as if over the edge of the world where no amount of golde could bring back the comforts of land and society? Could he come back to civilization? Was he so far beyond civilization as to be beyond the point of no return?

Let's find out in this tale told in the New World of the journey to the gulf stream of gold that once flowed into the sovereign seas.

Inner Cover or Frontispiece:

*"They ware beyonde us, Maties
In what we could or would ever dare do..."*

*Did such creatures once live?
Or, ware they mere stories a'ghostin' the pages?*

*They were high-Seas thieves or bucaniers
And they waged war on the whole world
And became impossibly rich
And were the nightmares of some
And the champions of others*

*Dashing and daring, they stole our
Desire and will to rules and law
But, mostly they were free
Unbridled as none before
And the jewels were all theirs...*

*What was it like to be beyond
The regular life, even from far beyond
The very edge of the Earth?*

*Let's see,
Let me take ye back,
To a time on the tack,
Into the Golden Ayge of Piracy."*

*William Henry Chandler
"The High Seas Chanticlear"
Charleston, Carolina 1756*

Back Cover

[Purpose to channel and direct the grand meaning of my piece, as in introduction , as an interest hook, and as a guide to the overall meaning of my story. It needs much work]

"Darkly and dastardly was our Captain La Fourche, but we'd sail under no other, for he was so sure so swift and so full of the stuff that makes many a man to follow him, not just to sea, not just to battle, but to war! Aye! A war with The Sea herself!

He was the dark Lord of the Sea, you see, he was so successful, but did ye know what treasure he really desired? [Replace underlined it gives it away too much] He was so great, that we never knew what he really was. One thing we did know, though, was that he was legendary in our time, and many another...

PART I The Oncoming Storm:

A.

Captured!

McShane, E. (1730). The Deuce Set Sails for Treasure! The Charleston Sentinel , II (i), 1.

The Haunted Treasure of Pirate Captain Daniel La Fourche

*The ten ton Bark, ‘The Deuce’
set sail from Charleston, Tuesday,
amidst rumors that this is yet
another expedition looking for the
great lost treasure of Pirate Captain
Daniel La Fourche, which is
supposedly laying on some
unknown island in the Caribbean
Sea.*

This treasure has a long history of infamy: It was originally robbed from the Inca Indians of Central and South America and loaded on the Spanish Galleon “*Palabra*” which set sail for Spain in March 1696.

An English pirate, Captain Samuel Lawless, commanding the hijacked Bark, ‘*Smitten*’ originally captured the treasure somewhere off Hispaniola. He had tallied in his ship’s log over fifty bars of gold and silver and an enormous cache of jewels.

After the defeat of the Spanish Armada England had become very determined to restore Spanish and English diplomacy, thus the Royal Navy was then tasked to eradicate all English piracy, especially in the Spanish Caribbean. And so they set their course to pursue and capture this treasure ship, *Smitten* and Captain Lawless. But Captain Lawless must have already buried the chest before his ship was captured off Jamaica for no treasure was ever recovered, and he swore - upon facing the gallows - that no man would ever find his gold without him.

At this point the trace of the treasure seemed to vanish for some time until Captain Daniel La Fourche, the infamous French Pirate, allegedly explored the nearby Isle of St. Jameston, possibly with some sort of treasure map in hand. The island inhabitants have given accounts of his venture there and they had speculated that he might have even found the lost treasure. But no treasure was ever found on the island afterwards. Many ships have since set sail looking for it and its destination remains a great unknown secret.

But what is definitely known is that many men have lost their

lives looking for that treasure, by storms, quicksand and malaria, to pirates, and the mysterious island tribes, The Carib, who were rumored to collect heads as *their* treasure pieces...

"Papers are jest full of blarney!" said Henry Shaw and he threw the newspaper down on the table in disgust with himself, for one day he must surely set the record straight and tell the grand, but real story of the treasure! He had never told anyone his tale for he had been heretofore afraid to tell it to any soul!

"What do ye mean by that?" John Zip asked, after glancing at the newspaper's headlines laying in a heap upon the table.

"Well, I know the true story of the great burried treasure!" Shaw exclaimed, finally. He let out a gasp of excitement, for he had decided right then that he would finally tell them the most incredible tale today!

"What! I don't believe ye!" the enemy said.

"Suit yeself, then." Shaw shrugged and settled back in his chair with his tankard of beer, sharp disappointment on his brow. Walt Ellington was so stuffy and he blocked everything that Shaw ever did! It was useless. He should just sack Walt's place one night as he used to hunt anyone who slighted him!

"Hey, wait! I wanna hear whut he's got to say." Zip barked back towards Walt.

Shaw looked over to him with hope in his eyes once again. He jestered to the barmaid, Ellen, to serve Zip a beer, on him.

"He 'talked-story' last week!" Walt, who was the town's teacher, complained bitterly to the old lady sitting at the table. He hated Shaw, for some silly reason.

"Well, some of us folks wanna 'ear it anyways!" Zip snapped back, while sitting down across from Shaw at a large oak table, where the other folks were joining them. "And if ye don't like it ye cun teck ye beer way over tharr."

"Now, Zip, let's don't fuss about it." Said she.

Zip got his beer, toasting Shaw: "Tell us about The Great Pirate Captain, Captain Daniel La Fourche, Mr. Shaw!"

"Aye-Aye!" he replied raising his tankard.

"And, how woulde ye know about that treasure, Mee-stair Shaw?"

"Well..."

The old lady dipped her pen and, thus, *the telling* had begun.

Shaw pointed to her. "Looks like Oy've got the floor, again, fellers." Then he smiled, looking around, triumphant, for if Mrs. Mary Elizabeth chose you, you were given an opportunity to talk of your travels and life on board a ship and have it all entered into the historical record, '*The Outer Banks Chronicles*.' This storytelling event occured every Friday evening in summer inside this pub at the end of the pier on Shannon Street, where she chose interesting figures such as Shaw for her society's

history collections. She was the President of the Battery's *Seaman's Hall Historical Society*, and the wife of the harbormaster, and a speedy stenographer. Her society was interested in recording the oral history of the treacherous Carolina Coastline all about them, for, it was a haunted coast, indeed it was already known as "The Graveyard of the Atlantic," where many ships had foundered, and:

"Where many a sailor still do sleep
forever in the deep."

And, the inland waterways all around the colonial coast had always fascinated most people in the Colonies for this is where the famous pirates had hunted in an labyrinth of inlets and marshes all along the Eastern Seaboard: There was Okracoke Inlet where Blackbeard had fought his infamous battle with the Royal Navy. There was Topsail Island, where Major Stede Bonnet had been captured. Elizabeth City was where Captain Samuel Lawless had once sacked. And, of course, there was James River Landing where Captain William Henry Chandler had captured his grand prize, *Chantilly*. These were all places where the public would later come to gaze and to wonder! And they all wondered why they wondered so.

In particular the citizens of Charleston and Savannah had speculated about The great pirate Captain Daniel La Fourche, for, a few years back his fleet had attacked a convoy of ships right off their very shore, and they were afraid that he would come onshore, again, like he had in Havana and Manzanillo, with an armada of five ships. He had also taken an island way over on the Eastern side of India, and sacked Santa Maribal off Panama City. No ocean was out of reach, nor was any coast safe!

For, Captain La Fourche was a man of great and overriding presence, for he had much charisma to lead and many other pirates had followed him and his ships to riches and to glory. There was a fascination about him and his crew - for they were so willing to do anything for the treasure - that they'd sail to the ends of the earth, and go far beyond what most could or would ever dare do! Indeed, he seemed untameable, and, even uncatchable! And so they all wondered: What were he and his pirates like? Where did they go? And what had become of their vast treasure? Was it glimmering its murderous charm, out there somewhere under the Seas awaiting?

The other ladies of the port began to enter the pub as market day ended, as the sun was low in the sky. As Shaw brooded they joined his table, sitting down at the long table next to their husbands, kinsmen and neighbors; each placing their baskets at their ankles and getting out their crocheting or darning and getting ready for a good long story-telling at week's end. And Shaw was an interesting sort to them: for he was rugged, and burly, a man with a full beard and powerfully strong, bronzed arms. He dressed and carried himself with the bearing and confidence of a worldly and well-traveled man of the Sea. Shaw had told them that he had been Captain of a bark called the *Derry* and most were fascinated by him. He had delighted them, in the past, with his long, true tales of sailors that had felt all the ferocity of nature and of man.

He brooded impatiently as he let them settle down, not willing to be interrupted again; quaffing a shot of rum as he waited, and his huge, rough fingers were rolling on

the shotglass as he set it down. Then the pretty Miss Wilton came and sat by her Aunt Louisa Wilton. Shaw brightened up quite a bit and began to smile broadly at her as she daintily sat down. Ladies at the table nodded to each other - he had a sweet spot for her. He then toasted her "To Miss Wilton!" and she blushed modestly and nodded in return.

Then he took a deep breath and announced dramatically:

"Folks, when Oy waere a kid, Oy sailed with none other than the Great Pirate Captain - Captain Daniel La Fooooooooooosh!"

It was silent for a moment of shock, but then Walt spat out from across the bar:

"Ach! As if he knew Cap'n La Forsh!" Walt griped to the others.

"Oy daid!" Shaw swore and then snapped: "And by the way, Meester Teacher, your pernounce his surname in French: "La Fooooooooooooooosh!" and the candle flickered when he again said that name. Several people around the table shivered. It was almost a spell to say his name.

"Oh, what a bother he is!" the teacher swore to the baker.

"Go on." said Mary Elizabeth before a fight could break out.

He smiled at her, delighted, "Well, eet's qoyte a long taile, mum..." he mused and held out his tankard backwards over his shoulder for Gallatin to fill it: "Juice me up real goooood, m'friend, fer Oy got a longish taile to tey-yell!" And he tilted his head back to take it all in: "It just brinns me soul it does, m'lady!"

And he shook his head at his impossibly lush story to follow. "Well, Oy..."

"And what makes ye so sure t'ware him?" said Walt.

Shaw bolted up straight and hit the oak table with his fist. Bang! Then he leaned forwards, conspiratorily, turning his head from side to side, gazing at each person around the table as he did so. In his black eyes the candlelight glowed as he sang:

*Tis a long tale, from me youth,
Gather 'round!
I've got a tale of villainy and fear!
And of Piracy on the hoigh Sea swells!
Of villains and swoine and ne'er do wells!"*

And then he leaned back and smiled as he began:

“We, who tell jolly long tales of The Sea, 'ave, in a court of our peers, 'ere, this tale to tell, if'n ye are willing, lads, *tis a tale of two moightly Captains - or three...*" and he lifted his glass up and toasted:

"To The Dark Lords of the Sea!!"

And while he drank, the folks in the pub could feel the cool, veering breeze come through the windowsills, as if in anticipation also to hear the talk as well. Who were these creatures, who had once haunted out past the marshes, past the bars?

Were these creatures really once out there? And, perhaps this strong man might just have known phantoms, such as these?

“On the British merchant brigantine, *The Saphire*, once waere a young steward naemed “Riggins” Chandler, justa no-bit bow-oy of twelve years of ayge and he weare *a’layin-to’* in ‘ammock after his foist trial on t’bow watch, awl ‘tuckered owt, though soon ‘twould be toime fer Captain’s chow a’fetchin’. A port wind had filled the sails ‘oigh aboove with a ‘ooosh, and ‘e could ear ‘er masts a’creakin’ and a’groanin’ even below decks under the strain of a ‘eavy canvas full with the Southernward Wind. ‘Her cargo holds shifted and tharr waere but a secondary swell set in the Seas to jounce ‘er and ‘er crew to their bones, poor mates; when the sun began to silhouette in red the big ship, astern on the ‘orizon!” The young boy came up to the aft deck and with a great bolt of shock, saw a dark ship now trailing them!

*“The oncoming stalkers
have come!”*

“Who are they?” the boy whispered to Collins who was swabbing the deck.

“I dunno but eet’s naught lookin’ s’good!”

The watch cried from the topgallent yardarm high above: “Ship Ahoy! Captain McKinney, *The Cyclone* sails three points off the starboard stern!”

“Oh, no!” cried Alex from the ratlines.

“Cain’t be! *The Cyclone*’s in the Caribe!”

“How do ye know that?”

They bickered above them on the fore mid-top spars.

“Me mate on *The Derry* told me they’d seen them tharr in winter.”

“Oh, Caeptin! Whet we gonna do, sirr?” McFlick called from the very top royals, to their ship’s captain, one hundred feet beneath.

Captain McKinney just put his hands out, saying “Crew! Calm! Calm!”

“We got storms on the horizon, look bo-woy” Derry said to the boy, aside, and pointing aloft, quoting a sailor’s maxim:

Red sky in maernin’

Sailor, take waerning

Red sky at noight

Sailor’s deloight!”

The dawn was crimson as blood, but the old seaman winked it all away, saying to the young kid, “Don’t worry, kiddo, Cap’n knows whut ee’s do-wing!”

“There be poirates in these waterrrrrs, bo-woy!” said Tatters from the main spar above. “And once we run, they’ll show us no quarter!”

“Whut’s quarter?” the boy asked, looking up to him on the spar.

“It means maercy, lad!” he called down to the kid, “Bewaere! Look, the black flag floies yet, even now!” He pointed, with his free hand, to the dark ship, astern, where they saw the dastardly Jolly Roger flapping in the tradewinds.

“...and we shall foight to the death, then! Aye! Crew! To the Death!!”

"To the Death, Aye!!!" the deck crew cried back in chorus of twenty men, aloft.

The boy looked up to them with eyes full of terror. Most of the crew, however, seemed to be elated and excited by this. Were they just sparing up for a good fight? Or, was there Gold to be had somehow?

"Belay that, Crew!" ordered the First Mate Lawrence. "Back to yer stations! All of ye!"

"Don't scare the bow-oy, Tatters!" the main lead, Cabbage chided as the deck force all quietly headed back to their stations, aft.

"But - Aye! He *should be* scared!" whispered Tatters. "For they be the 'ell-cats of the Sea upon us now and Cap'n La Foooooooosh will spare nary a soul!"

"Who's Cap'n La Fourche?" the boy uttered, astonished at hearing this name once again, a name which had been foresworn in all the Seas around the New World!

"He's the great poirate captain that captured the *Allegator* and claimed all 'er as a prize!"

The Saphire's Master-At-Arms, came up on deck directly from the captains quarters, ordering the Boatswain to pipe 'All hands on Deck.' The watch that was sleeping below came thundering up the passageways up onto the main deck where all hands were assembling.

"Gather 'round!"

Everyone on deck came excitedly around him.

"Crew, Cap'n says we're gonna arm up!"

"Hip-Hip...Huzzah!"

He gestered to a few of his chosen sailors who excitedly followed him below and they all returned topsides with five large great wooden crates that they excitedly heaved down upon the deck. He knelt to unlock one of them with great iron keys, throwing back the heavy trunk lid and the swords and muskets appeared before them all in the slanting rays of the afternoon sun.

"Awwwwwhh!" the mob cried and surged forwards to take a look. Then the Master-at-Arms issued each one a cutlass.

"En garde Cyclone!" Bilbow yelled, coming out of the throng with a cutlass in his hand pointing towards the dark ship astern.

"Touchez, Cap'n La Foooooooosh!" cried McFlick.

"Ye think they weare poirates, themselves." The boy uttered.

"Indeed, son, methinks some waere." Said Cabbage, observing this excitement with a sharp eye, for he had been to Sea many years and knew many things like most Sailors could be reclaimed from just about anywhere, including pirate ships!

The Master-at-Arms issued the able-bodied sailors and the sharpshooters muskets and they went to the ammo crate for their powder and shot, coming back on deck, swaggering with the new weapons stuck cockily in their belts, joking and sparring with each other as they did so.

The First Mate went below to the Captain and the crew rapidly resumed their lively talking. While it was true that the crew was quite scared, they were probably about to meet the legendary Captain La Fourche in battle! Some began to energetically

sharpening their cutlasses as others were passing the watch aloft swords and muskets.

"La Fooooosh, La Fooooosh, La Foooooooooosh!" one began to sing the well-known chantee, from a yardarm, and soon the ship rang out with the seasong, aloft. McShane issued Chandler a little dagger and leather sheaf and he just stared at it and felt its unfamiliar weight in his hand, and then looked at the dark ship closing in from behind them and shuddered in fear.

"How can this be?" the boy asked Billbow, tugging on his sleeve like a toddler, "Whoy do they sing of 'im?"

"Moight equals roight." Said Billbow shouted over their voices. "Kid, he's not a pirate, he's not a privateer, he's The True Lord out here, and we're in *His* kingdom now! He's fought fer these Seas thus they all belong to Him!"

"La Foooooosh, La Foooooosh, La Fooooooooooooosh!" sang along the crew. Perhaps they sung to quell their dread?

And then Dalliance led the refrain with:

"Dastardly, fiendish, La Fooooooosh, La Foooooooooooosh!"

"Quit yer singin'!" screamed The Mate, Lawrence came raging out the hatch and he blew a boatswain's pipe himself, shaking his fist at them. "Don't ye be glorifying that monstarr!"

The crew abruptly stopped singing, but they didn't stop watching the dark ship aft. The boy leaned forward on the gunwhale to see if he could see any of them. But it was a darkened vessel that silently trailed them astern, almost disapeering into the oncoming gloom of the evening and into the Seamists forming astern. How did Captain La Fourche dare to overthrow commonlaw and capture all the Seas for himself? How could he dare to tail them? What gave him the right, or, indeed, the might to do so? What was it Cap'n La Fourche had that he could he command such personal dread? The boy then had this queasy, almost seasick-like feeling that he was about to find out the answers to these questions. All afternoon these thoughts haunted him and worked over the boy's young soul, reminding him of his mother reading Twitches' verses in *Pyratica*:

*'Ghosts of themselves,
Once human, dead
Haunt the seas
Of golde and dread!'*

He watched the other mates for answers and against orders, they talked softly all afternoon from the yardarms:

"Y'know Oy 'blieve *The Cyclone*'s gotta be 200 feet long! And that's the biggest brig Oy've ever daid see!" said Fallow, climbing up the rigging to take a better look, while pointing. "Aye cuz she's got she's a full set of top royals, look, see the set tops'les!" he pointed aft. "And look how She's dressed in stays'l's and in stuns'l's 'bout her sides! She means to takes us, that she does!"

The Cyclone flew a luffing, large set of square-rigged sails aloft. On the very ends of the yardarms were set the stun sails to catch every possible puff. Between the

masts, the stay sails were rigged allowing the ship to sail much more into the oncoming winds than the square sails alone. But square sails could hold the tradewinds for weeks at a time with only minor bracing or adjusting to the steady tradewinds that flowed in giant belts across vast stretches of open ocean. In reality *The Cyclone* was dressed in a set of full sails, so that she could sail heavy up or downwind, and yet, she could cross an ocean as wide as the Atlantic, as well. *Indeed, what a mighty ship was She!*

And, indeed, rumor was that Captain La Fourche had done the ‘pirate round:’ he had once sailed *The Cyclone* from Charleston to the Azores, then down the African Gold Coast where he rounded the Cape of Good Hope. Then he had sailed over and moored the ship the pirate haven on St. George’s Island off Madagascar, for careening, and then he had sailed thousands of nautical miles North into the Indian Ocean to Calcutta. And then, somehow he had returned back with his ship - full of jewels! And it was rumored that he had taken, already, more than fifty ships around the known world!

And he had stolen hearts around the world, for, it was even sung in various pubs how he could: ‘*handle his ship like a beautiful dame, and how all the ladies swooned at the mention of his name!*’ Even Princess Leonora, the second cousin to the English throne, herself, had mentioned that she would very much like to meet the great Captain La Fourche!

And Shaw added, winking, ‘He could even become the next Sorr Francis Drake, for ‘er pleasure and, yea, for the jewels, aye!’

And Captain La Fourche’s ship, *The Cyclone* was so fast, too, they said, for it was as if the original owners had actually built *The Cyclone* for long-haul, open-ocean piracy instead. She had once been a slaver off the Gold Coast of Africa, and these ships were well-built for speed for carrying their perishable human cargo off to the New World thousands of miles away to work the rich fields of cotton and tobacco in Virginia and the Carolinas. *The Cyclone* could sail circles around *The Venture*, and, now she blew upon them, with a cloud of full sail, carrying the mad-fiends of the Sea!

And, all day, the haunted crew of *The Venture* looked over their shoulders as they climbed the masts and dropped tonnage of sail over the yards; while the sky grew dark and gruesome; and at evening bells, a gustfront had come upon them.

“Captain’s poiling on the sail!” said Michaels as the winds whipped around him and blew his long hair all around his face, like the caress of the windgoddess. “He’s goinna harness the storm, maties!”

And Bellew told the boy: “Look at how the Captain keeps close watch!”

Shaw exclaimed: “Captain McKinney seldom left the quarterdeck, those last two days, for ‘e kept a ‘round the clock vigil at the stern. He waere a brave figure: a lone man in yellar So’westers, ‘n rain cap, stoicly standing at the stern in the storm, his legs firmly braced on the deck.”

Though *The Saphire* heaved fore and aft and athwartships, or from port to starboard, Captain McKinney seldom had to hang on to the rigging as his feet held

him fast to the deck and his faith made him seem almost immovable, even by such a powerful storm! Thus they were comforted by their fearless and godly captain and most believed in his ability to steer them through the storm, pirates and all. He commanded great respect from his crew, and though he carried himself as a stern and proud captain, he was kind deep in his heart and often spoke to them about keeping faith and hope alive even in the wickedest of storms to Sea. "A weary sailor could rest his head in his berth with a captain like he." Cabbage had said one wild night in the Caribe a few months back.

At two bells, the rainsqualls blew in and hit them; and, as many thousands of sailors before and after them, the crew still had the wherewithal to climb heaving masts to reef soaked canvas upon the yards! Of course the pirate crew coming abreast of them were doing the same, but leaving their staysles a'flying!

"Ah, what the loife of a 'common' sailorman!" cried Shaw, lifting his glass high in the pub, "And, how meny of them are a'loying at the bot'um o' the Sea?"

Pursuit of Drums

A day later the crew of *The Saphire* began to hear *The Cyclone*'s drums nigh three bells:

"Boom-boom-boom-DEE-boom!"

"Boom-boom-boom-DEE-boom!"

"Boom-boom-boom-DEE-boom!"

Shaw regaled them:

"It waere a monster's heartbeat, it waere! 'Twere loike African voodoo drums or Injuns on some great plines somewhares deep in the colonies. This pulse drove us over the edges of fear and of froight."

Rumors could be heard up on the spars, as they tread out on the yards to furl sail:

"I don't reckon it's none but poirates!"

"Don't ye say that werd!" Caferty called upwards, aloft.

"Poirates! Poirates! Poirates!" One yelled back down.

"Agh! If I asks ye noote to say it - ye'll say it yet even mooore!"

"Cuz it's be none but Poirates, fer us, Maties! Tis our fate!" he yelled aloft.

"Jest pray, mates." Jude called out from the starboard yard of the mast. "Jest pray!"

"Preacher's trying again to save our rotten souls, agin." Said the foretopman going aloft on the mast to relieve one of the topmen. His marlinspike jangled on its lanyard as he climbed.

"Try eet, lads! Eeet werks!" Jude called back across the mast.

"Yes, motherrrrr!"

"St. Jude hath spoken!"

Shaw explained to the folks in the pub: "But of course, all sailors 'became reli-gee-us' up therrre, for, one was but a slippery hand-hold away from doom, as the saying goes:

'As the masts do sway,

Aloft, all sailors pray!'

"And then that evening they were side-swiped by the storm."

But, as soon as the blue sky poked through the clouds the next day, boomed the relentless drums, yet again!

"Boom-boom-boom-DEE-boom!"

"Boom-boom-boom-DEE-boom!"

"Boom-boom-boom-DEE-boom!"

"Returning to their nightmares, to their varmit, the drums pounded alarum of the decadent raving fiends' return!" Shaw said, with some versage in his voice, or, was it then rum?

"Crew! Calm down!" Captain McKinney cried with his hands out again.

"But the drums werked their beat into their souls, maties – into their vurrry rotten souls!" Shaw said, drinking up, crying:

"Boom-boom-boom-DEE-boom!"

"Boom-boom-boom-DEE-boom!"

"Boom-boom-boom-DEE-boom!"

As the tension in the story arose, the verses poured forth from Shaw:

"And it ware a decadent, stalking beat behoind them, beyounde them; tailing them, hurrying them, scurrrryng them away! It drove them onwards to floight and Captain McKinney had poiled on the sails 'oigh and ordered the riggin' kept taught! *The Saphire* slooped over in 'eavy sack of sail and nearly kissed the Sea swells, as she flew away, as fast as she could, poor goirl -- fer the noight waere a'coming, again, m' friends, and with the Southernward Wind and currents to out-flank them 'round yon cape!"

"She's tacking to Port, crew!" cried the watch, from the top gallant yard.

"What! Why!"

The Cyclone gracefully leaned into the wind to catch stiffer breazes now coming across the channel and thus She dramatically closed the gap between them. Tension arose on *The Saphire*, for pirates were known to be unmerciful and they were to be feared above all else – other than the storms of the Southern Seas!

The officers on the *The Saphire* now prepared a dangerous course change called a jibe - a move to catch the fresh winds and thus move away off their pursuers.

Shaw sang as he said:

"And the watch on deck that evening could hear somethun.... It waere.... Men's voices... a'coming across to them, aloft, and over the face of the waters, as the sun waere a'goin down over the channel...they waere a'coming abreast of them now... and then... silhouetting on the 'oigh Seas and against the feverish-red horizon; they tacked while they weare...while they weare a'singing a woild Sea-chorus and screeching out a war-croy! And upon the deck and even way upon the spars, they thought they could...wait a minute...the pirates then had lit hand torches so their prey could see them, from the bottom of the deck - to the top o' the masts, a'dancing a most terrifying war-dance - clanging their swords together, they *The Cyclone Pirates* - they danced!!"

"As t'winds do blow,

God have mercy on our souls!"

Picture: "They, the pirate crew, they danced!"



Shaw's dark brown eyes had grown wild with these last few words that he had uttered, as he vividly relived this oncoming attack to the pub. The ladies of the table pulled crocheted shawls around their shoulders while the men sucked down draughts that the barmaid, Ellen, continuously set before them. While she stuffed her tips into her apron's pockets, she smiled, looking down at her little treasurey, realizing, as many before and after her, that: Pirates were good for business!

But -- why? Why did they long for stories of them? Were they like many things of the Sea: Mysterious and unfathomable and born of myth and legend? Or, were they mere murderous thieves? Or, were they untamed men so free, that some folks had regaled them: The Dark Lords of the Sea?

"Back to our boy Chandler..." Shaw said "He caught up ee's brethe fer 'ee fancied that, upon the quarterdeck, bey the helm, now stood the veery man 'imself!! And then the Third Mate let 'im peek through the glass and he a saw in the circle a most impressive man, boldly standing thar - with a boot on the gunwhale; his long gobblly black hair ware a'floying all'round his arms. The man held a long spyglass a'covering his face; but from his bearing and Cap'n-top-hat and coat, the boy could see that he waere just as they descroibed him - those few who had shivered as they had warned them with this toast, last port-o-call in *North Star Pub*:

"Beware! Captain La Fourche sails these waterrrrrrrs!"

"Aye!" and they'd knocked their mugs upon the barrrrrr!

"Part French; part English... All parts bastarde!"

'Aye!' they'd cried.

*"And his treacherous, fiendish, First Mate O'Shea
Who had a harem of whores, and endless flack
And bejeweled daggers to yer back!"*

"Aye!"

*"Beware! The Cyclone,
Whose sails are soaked in bloode,
Whose crew's gone mad in the lust fer golde!"*

"Aye!"

*And they'd raised their mugs
In benediction—
Or, 'twere it supplication--
To fear gods of olde?*

And one drreadfully old mate

*Withn't nare a toothe in 'is
head
Leaned forward and said:*

*"Beware 'The Lost of the Sea',
For they'd spell yer doooooom
With treach-er-y!"*

Billbow cried to the First Mate, Lawrence "Meestair Lawrence, shan't we surrender to *The Cyclone*?"

"We all looked around to him on the deck, scan-dal-oized n' shocked, boot insoides we waere vurry as if we waere considering sich a move as well!"

But Mr. Lawrence snapped, "Are ye daft? 'Ave ye not seen the captain on deck all noight? 'Eee aint' afraid of sich poirates! 'Ee'd never back down before Goliath!" he cried. "So back to ye stations! And don't ye think Captain will *ever surrender!*"

"Thus we weare all consumed with the bravery and daring of our Captain McKinney backed by the loyal First Mate who truly believed in him! And so did we....

Seafight

Shaw continued with his tale, quite breathless:

“Next daey at dawnbreak the loight revealed a ‘eavy steamfog and the Sea, ‘erself, looked loike milk or a creamy onion soup!”

He rocked back in his chair, chantees going through his head and blood and he almost sang as he said:

“And all ‘ands braced for whut the next day woulda bring... Ah! Soon enough the drread of the next day had come - and those few who had slept - who ‘ad fallen where they had stood at watch all noight, fer minutes of most desperate sleep on deck! The sun peeked through the mist, from ‘er lair of the noight, and she loighted the soup-sky lit; and when all waere at peace in the thick shroud of a sleep, ‘twas ‘eard from somewhere in the fogback a muffled ‘BOOOOM!’ Their pursuers waere at ‘and, mates!”

“Fer once dawn awoked, the winds caeme, allied, creeping around in the fog, in ‘aunts, who pushed their foes forwards fast and to outflank them ‘round yon Cape!”

“A thousand commands now filled her ‘olds and decks and up to the sails, I tell ye, and boots pounded the deck heavily.

“She caemes!”

“All a-booot!”

“All ‘ands on deck!” Mr. Lawrence screemed.

The boatswain pipe screamed the command and then rang the bell many times. Ship’s force thundered on their way to the deck.

“She came now with the winds to her lee, pushing her right into us!”

“Furl the top gallant and the main!” Captain McKinney cried.

“Aye! Furl the top gallant, sir and the main!” and the commands arose upwards to the top’sles: “Furl the top gallant, and the main! Aye!”

“ard to larboard!” ‘ard to larboard!”.....“ard to larboard, Aye!”

They swarmed up the rigging now under direct musket fire! ‘Tack-tack-tack!’

“Furl mains’les! “Furl mains’les!”.....“Furl mains’les, Aye!”

‘Tack-tack-tack!’

“They’re upon us!” As if in a spell, they croied!

And the young seaman ‘pprentice reported to he’s new post on the Starb’d side o’ Main “Seaman Chandler reporting to The Main!”

“Stay out of wey till yer called fer bow-oy!” Lawrence shoved ‘im aside, desperate to secure the main, fer, then, looming upon them, and starting to breach her belly to bombast them... indeed a most drreadful sight filled the young apprentice’s oyes, for, what stared at him, now, were meny smoking black ‘ollows o’ canons - ‘bout er soides!”

“Oy! ‘er sails waere a’fillin’ and the deck alongsides waere a’bobbin’ with their same pace and pack of swells they too rode out on *The Cyclone!* And on ‘er deck, screamed fourty or so creatures bearing cutlasses and muskets, dressed in smocks, boots, and clad in coattails - in the height of high-seas buccaneer fashion!!”

"A detail ducked under their rail aimed their hooks and their winch -- gonna reel them - in a cinch!"

En chorus the horde cried altogether:

"SURRENDER OR YE WILL BE BLOWN OUT OF THE WATERRRRRRRRRRRRRR!!"

"And arose upon the deck, to the waters, 'tween ships to tops o'mizzenmasts, a most 'rrorrifying baying, a very bloodthirsty roar, indeed, a piratical battle cry, aye!"

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrrrggggggghhhhhh!"

"Even to this day, it curdles me bloood, lads, it curdles me bloood!"

Shaw spoke in a whisper almost, vividly reliving the battle before the people in the pub. "Look at me arms!" and he unbuttoned his cuffs and yanked back his long, flowing cotton sleeves to reveal that his thick, bronzed arms were covered in goose bumps!

"See!!"

Mary Elizabeth looked up and nodded and then her ink pen just flowed across her parchment as the pace of the story increased. She probably believed every word he uttered.

"But Captain McKinney orders to outflank! "Hard to starboard, Lawrence!"

"Aye Captain! 'ard to starboard!" the First Mate answered the command and *The Sapphire*, herself, sensed danger and veered away.

"As we neared the straits the chase became frantic, fer the rogues were gaining the vantage, mates, don'tcha see! They weare downwind of us now and blown roight into us. Oy realized many years later that we had fallen into a trap as the winds came backing through the straits and to the pirates favor. Captain La Fource had somehow foreknown what the winds would do there! And he had steadily paced his ship for days until both ships had entered the straits! It was as masterful as it was dreadful!

"Young Chandler tripped over the Boatswain who waere a'covered in blood and then Hodgkins fell on him from a spar!"

"Captain McKinney cried "Fire!" And, an enormous thunder shook the boy's belly from underdecks; he looked up to see *The Cyclone* shudder, her crew flew back, mowed down like a whip, but soon they got up, madder than 'ell, 'ollering' like a pack of woild Injuns! Whoile our gunners rearmed, they got their ship fast around and then - bless m'soul - they foired upon us direct, full broadsoides, lads, full broadsoides!"

Shaw took a gulp of rum, shuddered and then he spoke:

"Now, I don't know how many of ye er'd been to Sea, but I tell ye, if ya ain't e'r been in battle, nor a battle t'Sea, ye arn't knowing' the terror they'd felt - to see *The Cyclone* come upon ye like that! Oye! What a drrreadful day!! The main yard lay askew, its rigging a'loying like a mess of noodles all'about. 'alf the crew loy on deck, dead or injured and Captain McKinney loy face-down on t' foredeck!"

"ad Goliath felled him? I wept whoile I loy on deck, wondering if I b'lieved anymore!"

"Then came the terrifying savages to straddle across the gunwhales - bent on revenge and plunder: Captain La Fourche's terrible vengeance 'pon the Seas!"

"Amidst the cannon smoke, *The Cyclone* slammed her extra heavy duty jib-boom into our hull, while the drummer pounded a large booming drum on the deck."

"Chandler loy on the deck, (prolly crying fer e's mamma), as the dreadful new crew threw grappling hooks and then the roaring pirates 'urdled over the gunwhale en masse and boarded the poor, doomed *Saphire*, lads."

"And what a roar they made - loike a din of wolves, a scream of the Mongols, fourty or so descended on the deck as if a 'orde from 'ell itself!"

"Thooooooooook! Thooooooooook! Thooooooooook! Thooooooooook!" they shot on the main deck. The drum now pounded 'eavily away at the apex of their attack!"

"The boy ducked behind the whaleboat and watched it first- and all around him! The deck had filled with the tangy smell of gun-powder, and there they came through the smoke at 'im, like demons aroising from the firery lake!"

"And, then he took his first glimpse of a man most asuredly hell-bound - who must 'ave 'ad no eternal fear in him ever more - it was the vicious, scarred and ooogly face of the imfamous First Mate O'Shea a'come charging outta t'smoke!"

"Chaaaaaaaaaaaaaa-rge!" 'e screamed, cutlass out forwards, "Chaaaaaaaaarge!"

The drum beat on! Faster! Faster!

He charged aft where he screemed: "There they be, underdecks!" 'He held 'is cutless 'oigh! "Chaaaaaaaaa-rge aft! Chaaaaaaaaaaaaaa-rge!"

And thirty pirates followed the mate, en masse, past the boy, to the ladder well, where a ferocious battle ensued! Most of the crew had retreated down from the yards and some shot back from under the deck and fought a battle for some time, hand to hand, as the pirates fought from deck to deck, underneath him. Smoke arose with the cries, from the underdecks and many died that day in battle aboard as the drum-beat pounded on!

"Oy heard thar screams!" Shaw cried with his hands to his temples. "Oy could hear their screams from under the decks! They were lost souls!"

"Suddenly there was a hooosh and even the drummer halted, and someone cried out from the decks below:"

"Cease Foire! Cease Foire! We surrender!"

A piece of sail cloth flopped up and onto the deck. "We Sur - REND - Der!!"

"Come topsoides with ye hands o'er ye heads!" cried their First Mate with his musket pointing at the hatch. "Don't ye as much budge, or we'll blow yer brains a-waaaaaaaaay!"

"And the poor crew crawled and limped topsoides and surrendered with hands hoigh over their heads. I watched them come; they were a'drippin' in crimson! A detail of poirates stuck muskets in their faces and screamed at them to march aft, where hands (I found out later) named Bainbridge and Distemper and a few others and who egged them on and who began to beat them with a cat-o-noine-tails! Oy heard their screams! Oy hears them to dis day, maties, to dis day!" Shaw shook as he spoke! He shook his fist at them: "Ye don't know the sounds o' hell, till you heard the sound of a man being beat to an eench o' he's loife! I hated those two friggin' mates from thence on!"

Shaw grabbed another drink, breathing fast as if still at battle! Bottom's up!

"And ye wanna know sumthun?" he said leaning forwards conspiratorily. "One day both of those mates jest disappeared off the ship in a storm! Who knows whut ever happened to them. No one cared to look into the matter!" Shaw quaffed another shot, cussing "By God!"

"And Lawrence and Billings got the most beatings fer following their Captain McKinney's orders to the end!"

"And, Chandler, the boy, had lain there, useless, behind the boat as a witness to all this savagery, unmolested. What could he, but, do?"

"And one pirate came naimed 'Lateen' (that ugly ole pirate they did hang) he kicked Chandler in the hoind and grabbed him by the collar:

"Don't ye move one eench bo-woy!" And 'e bound Chandler's mouth, 'ands and feet, and toied 'em to the gunwhale, all the whoiles cussing him and his mother and father and all his kin back to Adam."

The rest of the savages, some thirty men, then swarmed up the masts and reefed her sails way up and leaving the poor lady *Saphire* nude and bobbing alongsides, and cinched to *The Cyclone*. "And they see-cured *The Saphire*'s rudder to run her with *The Cyclone*: They were like two sisters, one evil, one good, running 'longsides, cheek to cheek!"

Other mates together heaved mauled bodies over board, whether dead or alive, turning the whitecaps crimson in their wake. The deck stained crimson around their boots. And the gulls swooped in like birds of carrion as the gore filled the deck, and their cries mixed with the moans of half-dead mates while the smoke of the guns stung the air mixing with the seaspray tinging the rigging.

"Then the Foirst Mate screemed: "Go in yon hold and check out the cargo!" And they ravenously swarmed below decks and the boy could hear their foul screams:

"AAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRggggggggghhhhhh!"

They must have come upon one of the great payroll chests in the hold. A young hand brought over a heaving line, chains and tackle used to haul cargo, and tied a monkey's fist knot to it which he tossed over the main spar. They all worked very efficiently as a team, Chandler noticed, and soon they had pulled the tackle over the beam and another tied it to the chest, below, and then thirty-odd men heaved on the block line and tackle and pulled the heavy chest over onto *The Venture*'s main deck, where it landed with such force that *The Venture* shuddered and listed starboard! Then the pirate First Mate, Mr. O'Shea strutted up to it:

"Give me yer axe, Bret McShane!"

And then he heaved it very high and hit the lock with such force that the brass lock burst and ricocheted off the chest and knocked into the boy's left ankle.

"Owh!"

O'Shea then unbuckled the hatch and boldly flung the chest open and how they howled at the new gotten gains!

Oh, how they all howled!

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaaaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrrrggggggggghhhhhh!"

The glimmer of the sun bounced off the gold. "Eee wuz loike magicul beams!"

Suddenly it is a lot quieter and the First Mate cried obediently, standing up and facing back aft at attention: "All see-cure on t' deck Cap'n!"

The sound of heavy boots could be heard now pounding all the way up to the quarterdeck and then Chandler heard a most masterful laugh overhead, Aye, a wily, Sea-wicked bail echoed all around him:

"*Ha! Ha! Ha! HAAAAAAA! AH! Ha! Ha! HAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!*"

And the boy looked up to see a sword point 'tween his eyes...

"...and behind that long, silver sword stood Captain La Fourche, me friends!"

[can insert a picture here for a dramatic pausing effect]

Pirate Booty

"Now, how can you know of such fine details, Shaw, if you've never been there!" Said Walt, who had tried, in the past, to insinuate things against Shaw. Walt was a school teacher and he was angry at such a rogue holding royal court every weekend in the pub. He wanted a return to tamer times and genteel ways, of, "shoot, to lace, doilies and me granny's silken underpants!" griped Shaw in the past. For mannered Londoner ways were not tame enough for these New World wild shores, born from the blood and swash and swarthy, worthy sailors, such as Shaw.

"I'm getting fast to that, Walt! But ye're going to have to wait yer toime, fer, this here tale is *moy* tale and I've got the floor! Anybody else gonna try to stop me?"

No one else moved; they were hooked onto the story.

"Well, alroight then, onwards with me tale! As I wares a'sayin'—before I was so rudely interrupted--our boy, Chandler, ware a'staring straight up into the sword of the most fearsome man of the Seven Seas!

"The boy looked up into the Captain's black oiyes and they ware just smoking with this triumph and he just laughs and says to t' First Mate:"

"Piece of cake, Mister O'Shea!" He sheathed he sword with a swish, and then twisted his black mustache whilst appraising the kid.

"What did he look like?" asked one of the ladies sitting around Shaw.

Shaw smiled at *this* interruption, "Well, well! The ladies all loiked Cap'n La Fourche!" he laughed and then they all did. "Fer, he was vurry tall and masterful, with long, thick black locks and a single golden earring - he looked jest loike a Corsair off t' Barbary Coast! But, he wore a very dashing, European overcoat, pants and boots - suitable for a Queen's courtier - loike Seer Francis Drake, or purhaps Sir Walter-friggin'-Raleigh! He had the masterful manners of, say a duke; and he smoiled with a most fiery triumph whoile his black oiyes ware a' lit up with glow of t' battle! And, once in you gazed in Cap'n's oiyes, they cast a spell upon you and tweren't no escaping ones fate, methinks, and I did loy tharr and did nary a thing!"

"Aye, Cap'n, 'twere a Soonday dish!" flatters the First Mate O'Shea coming 'longsides Cap'n, and now both stood there a'lookin down upon the boy, me, together, whoile I loy on me back like an overturned Sea-turtle!

"They were two very worldly and accomplished Seamasters, there, standing above, overlooking me and I wuz quite astonished to be laid prostate before them!"

"It's about a thousands pieces of eight, Cap'n!"

"Aye!" he cried, still looking upon me with this fierce smile! His eyes were all a'lit up with the glory of the treasure. "Aye the things we will do now, Marcus and the places we will sail!"

"Let's sail to Port Royal, sir." He whispered, aside. "The crew just wants to go home, Cap'n."

"Aye..." Cap'n said, methinks a bit re-luck-tantly." Sais Shaw.

"And then the whole deck force of fourty-odd men all gathered around them, their battle gear clanking and all their oilskins and leather chaffing and their muskets still a'smoking, and they all gathered there a'laughin' downwards at me per-dicament."

"Get-up, bow-oy! And take me to yer captain... or, I should I say *former* captain!"

"And all the dreadful crew laughed loudly at these words, while Lateen untied him and grabbed his collar and hauled Chandler up to his feet. Leashed like a puppy, the boy lead the whole bunch of pirates over to Captain McKinney, who layed face down on the foredeck, "fallen, mates, I tell ye, fallen!"

"Check him out, Mr. Cindahr!" Cap'n' orders and Cindahr turns over Captain McKinney, whose shirt was speckled red! But, believe it friends, Captain McKinney had withstood their full broadsides and he ware aloive! "Cap'n, Cap'n." Says I. "Wake up, sir!" and he opened his oyies and looked dazed and weak but, then, he sees that same sword point in his oyies and he backs up to lean against the foremast, hands hind head. Mr. Cindahr lashed his wrists backwards to the mast in a jiff."

"Captain McKinney, ye are now a prisoner under my *arrest*." Says Cap'n La Fourche, lounging over and sticking the cutlass in his face.

"And to this day I wonder how he knew who our poor captain wares..."

"Alas, Shaw, you give yourself away!" butted in Walt, again. "You said "I" and you said that Captain McKinney was your Captain -- thus, YOU were aboard Her! In other words you were once a pirate!!!"

Shaw appeared startled at all these interruptions. He seemed to be used to being absolutely feared and obeyed on board ship. "Shoot, landsmen were certainly different, and genteel or, as in an oath, softer men than we!"

And Shaw snapped back: "Now ye old rastabout, ye! It is moy tale and ifn' I wanta pertend I ware thar on *The Saphire* and *The Cyclone*, why then, it's moy tale and aint' any ye man enoof to roust me out of me story, then I'll tells it just like I loikes to..."

"..."

"Look, it's called poetic incense or sumthin-or-rather, and I'll do what I dern please!"

"Poetic license" the teacher corrected.

"Shut up!" and Shaw crossed his big arms and refused to speak any more.

"Uh-oh!" Some looked around each other, fearful of yet another pub brawl.

"Teeee-ruble!"

"Trouble by the Double!" someone else sang.

"Well?"

"Well, Shaw was one of them darn it!" said the schoolmaster, looking around to everybody there. He probably even wanted to call the port constable again!

"So whut, Walt! It be an old tale eenywways!"

"Tis nigh of two-score year! And..." he leaned all the way forwards and almost whispered "I've never told any of ye this before: Oy've already been to troial about it!!" Everyone's eyes grew wide for the story was getting even better!

"Aye, ye heard roight folks, I was in a troil in Bristol, none-the-less!"

No one even breathed for a second. Tried? In England? A Bonafide story!

"What was the verdict, sir?" asked Smithy, asked him, rather carefully.

Shaw said. "Just ye wite!" And then he smiled for he knew had them hooked!

No one else dared to move.

"I, for one, want to hear what happened to Captain McKinney." Someone finally spoke. They all looked over, it was none other than the pretty young Miss Wilton! She spoke directly to Shaw and they all looked over to her with open mouths, in shock, for she seldom spoke at such places. Shaw grinned luxuriently and tipped his drink to her, saying, "Aye, per-tee lay-dee, but I'm needin' another drenk to juice the story outta me now!" And he held his tankard out backwards, once again.

The pub owner, Peter Gallatin, hurried over and poured him one more over his shoulder, right there, for, surely a shot of ale was surely cheaper than a torn up pub. "Please continue Meester Shaw" said he wearily.

Mrs. Mary Elizabeth cleared her voice diplomatically and said "Mr. Shaw, actually I think we're just getting confused as if it were really you there in the story or some other boy named Chandler." She lifted her pen from the parchment as she spoke, and seemed confounded, for he told the story at times from his own perspective and at other times from the third person perspective, and the audience was getting confused on whom he really meant. "I'm having trouble transcribing your words, sir - of who is whom."

But, she tactfully didn't speak of the question that really loomed about the table that night about Mr. William Henry Shaw, who had come to town some five years back and bought the fine Multry House and two sawmills seemingly without an inheritance or, even working a day for them. The shocking question now was:

"Was he once a pirate?"

But Shaw leaned forwards, putting his elbows on the table and chin in his hands and winked: "Sumtimes, per-tee lady, tis me -- and, sometimes tisn't --- and, fer gallowsake mustn't be -- but some boy forced into POY-ra-cy!"

Mrs. Elizabeth giggled like a school girl at his incessant use of rhymes.

And he laughed at himself too: "Oy was always good at the rhoymes, madame!"

All around the table laughed nervously at this wild Sea character before them named Shaw - or whoever he really was.

He winked over to his right at Miss Wilton and said:

"Do ye know that when Oy wares foirst mate on t' bark *The Cat's Tale*, Oy was ship's song master - and Oy' know so many rhoymes, mum, that Oy've sung in me many yars out t' Sea:

'Round the capstan,

'Round the main,
 'Round the world, thrice
 'n back - again!"

He was showing off to Miss Wilton; how he laughed - like the wily Captain he was telling them all about; so leaning back that his throat was facing up to the overhead and his laughter filled the pub like pipe smoke. He had masterful manners were those of a man that had commanded a ship full of renegades, and his huge personality also filled the pub - certainly like that of a captain of a ship!

The audience drank up; the wind came in across the sill and touched their cheeks, reminding them all how close they all were to the Sea and to these very rascals out there! Was he one of them? Maybe!

His big house on the hill rather presided over the port, but on the pier, here, he ruled in his court of stories often enough, in this pub. There were terrible rumors of a mistress he had kept once, up there, perhaps in the past, hidden in his big, decadent house. Or, was she yet another madam, working her trade up in the hills? Who knew. He never let any of them up there. There were questions. Who was he really?

Shaw took another swig, while his eyes glared, daring anyone else to speak. "I'm beating the tar out of the next *in-tare-rup-tayre!*" He was a burly and fiersome man, tan and well worn by the brutal Seas. He had fists like four-pound canon-shot and piercing eyes that had seen all the raging Seas. Nobody dared speak any more! The teacher, Walt quaked, for he was realizing, rather late, that was a dead man should he ever speak another word against Mr. Shaw, again!

Shaw took yet another great big swig "So, anyways, where was I? Oh - I remember - poor Captain McKinney tied up with his back to the foremast with a cutlass a'stickin' in he's face -- the very smote silver sword of Cap'n Daniel La Fourche!"

"Captain McKinney, ye are now in the position to accommodate me, in whatever aim I so choose. Ye will be given a choice to join us, or, ye will remain in the brig until we find the means to dispose of you - at our convenience." Sayeth he, the Cap'n La Fource like an ol' Sealawyer, and then - *Bam!* - he drove his cutlass into the deck, saying' "This is the choice every man must make when they cross paths with me!" Cap'n leaned forward on the hilt of his sword awaiting an answer.

But, only the winds could be heard luffing the reefed slack sails of *The Saphire*, high overhead, for Captain McKinney did not answer him.

"Well?"

Now, the boy had been in over three years service to Captain McKinney; he knew Captain McKinney had not even let an April Nor'easter off Cape Hatteras daunt him, nor had he let the ten foot fetch of a September hurricane, off Hispaniola, throw him, and so the boy knew that he would never join the likes of these. Captain McKinney looked straight up to Captain's La Fourche and replies simply:

"No sir. I will not."

"What?" Captain La Fourche says, rather afflicted.

"I will not join you." McKinney repeats quietly.

"Oh?" Cried Cap'n La Fourche.

"And with a grunt more of *per-pleck-shun* than I'd reckoned him to have he yanked out his fencing sword from his sash! Swish!"

"Then *En Garde, Monsieur!*"

"The crew, in chorus to this, began to stomp their boots in unison on deck -- a savage jury demanding piratical *adjudication!*"

The drummer pounded a sentence in cadence with the stomping on deck.

"Doom! Doom! Doom!"

"And again!" cried the foreleadman, Billbow.

"Doom! Doom! Doom!"

"And again!"

"Doom! Doom! Doom!"

"DOOOOM!"

"Run him through!" Screemed the First Mate, O'Shea, with hand up high in the air, but then he turned uncertainly to the Cap'n."

And Shaw said: "But Cap'n waeren't listening to his First Mate, of course, he held up the tip of his fencing sword now and rubbed the tip of the blade with his thumb in a bit o' thought, *in-tro-speck-shun-loike* fer a moment, only the winds spake and his thumb bled drops of bloood onto the deck."

"Cap'n Blood!" Said one in a chill, pointing to the deck.

"Nay! Captains' bloodshed! Both!" And they stood thar streck dumb with sailor superstition for, on the deck before them were, indeed, drops of both captains' blood!"

"But with such fencing expertise Cap'n La Fourche suddenly lunged forwards from the crowd with his fencer and expertly swythed a light 'X' on poor Captain McKinney's left cheek before they could all but breathe!"

"OOOOOOOOGH!!" Captain McKinney flinched but could not grab his cheek for his arms were bound taugh behind the mast!"

"Touché!!" Cap'n La Fourche cried while still lunged forwards with his fencer stuck between Captain McKinney's eyes!

We all gasped!

Then Cap'n sprang back as quick as a whip! As he stood there he tilted his head in for a moment in an almost artistic-like appraisal of his mark. Then smiled that wild smile of the open oceans' triumph, for, it was perfection! "X marks the spot!" he cried. "You're our treasure now!" he declared. I thought he meant ransom was their treasure.

The crew, greatly astonished by Cap'n's intrepid move, began to yell and applauded with approval of their captain and began a'dancin' all around the deck, screaming n' clangin' swords together. A tall mate belted out '*Derry, Derry Dublin Lass*' and they jigged their boots to it. They were a lively crew!

"I jest stood thar in shock and Captain McKinney wares almost completely undone fer a minute! Over all the noise on deck, I could hear him wanting to croy out! He breathed in deep, heaving breaths! Yet he said naught! He ware a brave man!"

"René!" Cap'n called, snapping his fingers in the air. "Fix him up!"

René, who I found out a bit later was their cook, hustled through the throng and knelt down and quickly pulled out his hanky and pressed it to Captain McKinney's cheek. The rag turned rapidly crimson. Then he motioned for the boy, to come over to hold the rag as the pirates wildly danced and sang all around them. René trotted over - he was quite fat for a Seaman - and got a big tin tankard from the galley, rigged a tarry twine on its handle and threw it overboards, hauled it back up and gently poured the briny Seawater on Captain McKinney's cheek to cleanse it. Our Captain McKinney flinched, while the water spilled all over his fine cotton blouse. Their Second Mate, I learned later, a Mr. Faerburne, then gave the cook a flask of rum, which René then poured on the 'X' and then he deftly slipped Captain McKinney a big gulp of rum; as the rest danced and carried on!"

"That'll help ye, sir." René said quietly.

"Thank you, Sir." Our vanquished captain uttered hoarsely to Rene in reply.

Rene tended to all his numerous cuts, winking "Of course, Sir."

"Captain La Fourche rules the Seas!" a few called out during this stampede. And in decadent dance, they jigged around the two captains to sailor chantees, as their mates clapped and the drummer pounded away. Quite pleased, Cap'n La Fourche leaned back, lit a pipe offered to him by the third mate, Mr Cindahr, and then crossed his arms, puffing on it contentedly as he watched them dance around through the gunsmoke lingering on deck. The sun had come out of the fog, and patches of seafog appeared out of the mist, leeward, looking almost like eerie grey islands out there. A light breeze tossed the coarse, black hair of our brand new captain – Captain La Fourche, and he turned to look in its direction.

"Enoooof bloood fer now!" said Cap'n La Fourche, quickly handing the Third Mate, back his pipe, and sheathing his foil. "Purritans..." he muttered, twirling, delightfully, the 'r' with a slight French accent mixed with the seatalk of a blimy, Bristol-born, sailor man. "To the brrig, then, and let them say their prrayers down tharr!"

"I'll pray for YOU Captain La Fourche!" Asserted Captain McKinney. Everyone there froze. Cap'n snapped his fingers and the music stopped. Captain McKinney boldly faced the pirate captain once again. Chandler who was still kneeling besides him, who was holding the rag to his cheek, could feel these brave words as they came out of his mouth.

"I will pray!"

"Avast! How do ye know me name?"

"Why, Captain, it's upon every lip from Charleston to San Juan!" Captain McKinney cried back, causing Cap'n to smile.

"Hear that, brrrethren?" Said Cap'n, looking all around, pleased, his thumbs stuck in his belt.

"...And your HEAD is wanted from England to America!"

"Well, they can't have it yet!" Cap'n quipped and all laughed hard, even stomping their boots, joking back:

"I rather am attached to me head, too, Cap'n!" said Scallows and Cap'n laughed back at him, "Ha! Ha!"

"Ye aren't quite dun with yer head yet, Sir! Oy think Oy'll keep me head attached too, fer a whoile at least!"

"I'll trade ja fer moine!" Burbage said.

"How much do ye want, Scallows?"

"Neigh, twenty schilling!"

"Whut! Cap'n tell him that he's too steep in proice!"

"Truly!" Cap'n laughed, delighted.

"It's fer all this brainage-Burbage!" he said pointing to his temple.

"Naw, for the goo-lookin' lay-dees moine head brings!"

"Well, I could tell ye whut the lay-dees loikes about me and it aint' me friggin' noggin!" said Matty.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" Ship's company laughed and hollered.

"It's yer nose, then!"

"It's the only thing beeg aboutcha!"

"I noticed Cap'n ware smoiling broadly at all their joking, his arms crossed in deloight - they just loved their pirate captain, for they energetically sought to please him, even in just their jests." Said Shaw.

"Then Cap' n twirled his moustache again; he waere a great man."

"Finally, the laughter and jokin' lulled a bit and they all looked to their captain and you could see both waere full of thenken'."

"Let's haul the treasure aboard!" Cap'n La Fourche cried as he glance to the sails aloft.

"Hip! Hip..." cried the main foreman, Mr.Cabbage.

"Huz-zah!" they cried at once, and the whole lively crew jumped to it.

They began by using the blocks and tackle on *The Cyclone*'s main yardarm winches to hoist the huge chest across the water and aboard their own ship. Meanwhile, others formed a long line of hands from the hold to the gunwhale and swiftly transferred all of the captured provisions across the gunwhales and onto their ship, where another long line passed the cargo into the hold of their ship. While this took place other hands transferred all the new prisoners and bound them to the foreward gunwhale.

"All aboard was 'eee-fish-in-sea' and 'organ-knee-say-shin,' quipped Shaw, having such fun with the words, "Shoot, 'twas rather loike a Naivy ship! And folks, I was later startled to find out we were in the hands of a vurry capable Naivy man, indeed!"

"*Hurry!* Make haste! The weather is getting bad!" Cap'n cried, looking aloft at the oncoming cloud deck, above.

"Suddenly we felt the ship rock in a different way and the tell-tales shifted and the sails began to luff and flap loudly overhead and t'boom of the *Saphire* waere knocking at the lazy-jacks a'wanting ta'come a'boot in a windshift. Someone ran over and hastily lashed a preventer to the boom to try and stop her from a wild, dangerous jibe!"

"Ahoy! Squall line, Cap'n!" someone cried from aloft pointing to a cloud formation due South.

All hands turned to starboard for a look. A long of stratus and cumulus, that must have been forming during the attack and obscured by the cannon smoke, came on suddenly with a surprise whoosh before the front, "as squalls will do in those dastardly Southern Seas!"

"Well, take them aboard and clap them in irons!" Cap'n said pointing to Captain McKinney and the boy. Then he yanked his cutlass out of the deck! "Prepare to cast off!" He sheathed his cutlass and then barked all kinds of tacking commands:

"Look lively, Crew!" he pressed.

"Chop the damn lines!" he screamed. And the Boatswain, Izzy, piped this. Two strong crewmen ran to the sides and heaved giant axes to the mooring lines that had been laid across the gunwhales with the whalers hooks.

"Wear ship!!" Cap'n cried to the First Mate "Quickly! Before the storm comes!"

"Aye, Cap'n, All 'ands!! WEAR SHIP! Go to yer stations!" cried The Mate. "All Hands! WEAR SHIP!" and the Boatswain's pipe screemed this.

The crew immediatly formed organized, well-drilled details of at least fifteen or more men per each bracing line. "Heave - HO!" they cried as they fiercely fought the winds - just as fiercely as they had just fought the crew of *The Saphire*. "Shoot, all loife was foighting, t' Sea!" said Shaw gripping his hand into a fist with conviction.

"HEAVE - HO!"

"And a'

"HEAVE - HO!"

"God, save our souls!"

"HEAVE - HO!"

"Send us not below."

"HEAVE - HO!"

"Perfect us from the woes! "

"HEAVE - HO!"

"And a

"HEAVE - HO!"

Shaw was shaking his head as he said: "*The Saphire* began to drift off away now - a ship all on her ownsome now! Awwwww... It was a sad soight to see her fend fer herself now. Me last glance I saw her bobbing up and down in the swells and winds,

still, somehow pointing our way as if trying to catch back up to us! It was a sad soight. I tell ye, ships have a spirit!" he gulped.

"The helmsmen turned the stern into the wind, as the bracing line crews pulled in all the sails on the Starboardside. They had to yank with all their might on the running rigging as the fierce winds came on and wanted to have their own way with the sails and rigging! I later learned that this ship had eight thousand square feet of sail!"

Green water started flowing onto deck when the ship dropped into a trough, dousing all the tied up prisoners. The boy heard Cap'n order "Tilly go cut loose all the new prisoners loose! Give them a fair chance to live, Tilly!" Tilly rushed forwards and quickly sliced each line. Once freed they all screemed together: "Huzz-zzah!" They then quickly divided up and ran over to each gang on the bracing lines and then joined in the frantic struggle, for even though brutally whipped and bleeding, it was now a desparate battle! For, the true arch enemy had always really been just the Sea! The new prisoners would be spared the brig for helping despite their terrible bloodshead. And of course - they were now becoming crewmen as well!

John Tilly would surely be toasted in the drinking parties to come. But it was actually Cap'n who had saved them, they boy noted.

Lateen grabbed the boy's ear, but even as he wrenched him, the boy watched Captain McKinney intently for what he was about to do next. Captain McKinney struggled against the sharply heeling ship and the hold of the brutish Third Mate, Cindahr to look around and saw that the remnants of his surviving crew had just joined them!

"And we were taken below, where we would stay meny a day" Said Shaw.

"That left only Billings, Lawrence and Muck from the original crew who would not help them with the squall line, and also Bryce, who soon left us for the great beyond and the wily sailmakers, Machen and Lynchpin who had turned right there crying to Captain La Fourche to join them formally as sailmakers. The rest - some forty odd men - waere dead or now pirates!"

The Treasure of Capt Samuel Lawless

Scupper clamped Captain McKinney's heels in irons that had been permanently affixed with bolts upon the keel seemingly for that purpose. Did they take a lot of prisoners? Lateen tied the boy's arms to a beam nearby. The boy sat on the keel, desparatly demoralized, in the dank, dark hold beneath.

Cussing them, the two pirates left them in the dark and the two prisoners were rocked wildly about as the main part of the storm begin to hit. Their restraints held them as fixed targets for objects to fly into. For two hours She, The Sea, assaulted them so! Her winds howled through the masts up on deck, in mean, fierce screams – She took vengeance on the ships of men who sailed to Sea. She picked up wave tops and strung them into stinging mists that tore crews faces and heaved wavecrests on board to white-wash the main deck well, taking and steeling anything away that was not lashed firmly to the ship. She, the Sea was a thief!

Shaw said "She wares a tough new ship *The Cyclone* and a headstrong lass at that! She ploughed her bow into the wavetrains, stubbornly for hours upon hours, mates!"

"My! What a goirl!" cried Shaw about his new ship, *The Cyclone*.

Finally the storm winds subsided into steady, cool breezes. The Sun peeked out from Her lair behind the towering cumulus to assure the crew that She was still in charge. However there were still huge, but smooth green rollers of Seaswells for *The Cyclone* to ride up and down - giving the bow watch, a young hand named Ravenwald, who had tied himself to the peak of the jib boom, a spectacularly terrifying view of the mountainous towering swells looming over them and then as they flew steepily down the back of the swell as he stared into the dark, jaden abyssal troughs between the mountainous crests.

"Captain, are ye okay, sir?" The boy asked him, for, his captain had just lost his ship, his cargo, his men, and - well, everything! But Chandler observed in the dim light, that his Captain McKinney was still alert, holding the 'X' bandage on his cheek with one hand and the other was up gesturing for silence. "He was a'listening to the sounds above them, intently, and, indeed, still on duty! No time fer tears from Captain McKinney! He wares a brave man!"

"But moy eyes ware a'wellin! I wuz so yeng then." Said Shaw. "Boo-hooo!"

"After the huge swells had subsided somewhat, the next day, the pirates began to count up the loot and then, they made our obedient First Mate, Lawrence, climb down through the scuttle as well."

"Captain, where are ye!" he called out in agony after he fell on barrels piled on the deck.

"Over here, Aaron!"

"Oh! I just threw me shoulder out, Captain!" he cried.

"Chandler, lean over here." Captain ordered and he struggled with two fingers to loosen the boy's arms and got Lawrence, somehow, to pull the ropes off with his good hand. The boy was now free. Feeling like a bit of a hero, Chandler cleared a place for the First Mate to lie amongst the barrels and tack.

"Grab me hand, bo-woy!" Lawrence cried, while he braced his left shoulder against a barrel. "Now yank forwards with all yer moight!"

The boy did so.

"Harder! Yank the 'ell out of it! Yank it loike a whip!"

After several wrenching tries the joint slid back into place with a pop and the boy flew backwards against the keel. "Owh!"

"Awh! Thank ye kid!" Lawrence cried and lay back breathing hard and rubbing his shoulder joint, over and over. "Thank ye! Thank ye!"

As Lawrence lay there breathing hard, the kid then snooped around the dimly lit bilge, searching amongst the various barrels and crates. He found some molasses and water barrels and a mug that had fallen into the bilge. He opened the spigot and poured them drinks. Then, unbelievably, he even found a bottle in the bilges with rum still leftover in it. Perhaps some of the pirates were sneaking down here and having secret little parties, for they were rather well supplied with rum and water. Lawrence stripped his blouse and Chandler dribbled the rum all over the multiple lash-wounds on his back. He swore out in agony! "But keep pouring it Chandler!" he cried.

And then he poured them drinks, relieving much of their pain and they ware very grateful with him. "Thank ye, Chandler! Thank ye!"

Lawrence, lay on his belly and attempted to let his wounds dry out in the dank hold, groaning as he did so. The boy covered his legs with a part of a sail cloth to give him the tiniest bit of warmth and comfort. He drapped over Captain McKinney a large sail piece as well. Captain's ankles were in shackles, but he could relax now against the keel. Captain finally fell asleep against the slanting bulkhead, down there.

And they rested much of the afternoon in the dank hold.

The Rabble

After a long while in the dark, feeling much restored, the prisoners began to talk.

"What did they ask of you, Aaron?" Captain McKinney asked.

"Oll's they wanted to know was the latest news all about the treasure of Cap'n Lawless - warn't that the one hijacked from the Spanish treasure ship, *La Palabra*, Captain?"

"...think so..." The goodly Captain said.

"The Captain himself asked me many questions, fer he wanted to know if Cap'n Lawless or his crew had told the Brittish of the location of the gold, in order to save their necks!"

Captain McKinney sat there in the dark for a long time pondering on the dark fate of Captain Lawless and his wretched crew, for it was always so dreadfully shocking to hear of anyone's plung into hell, whether deserved or not. They talked about his fate for the next few days in the hold, discussing the scuttlebutt – or rumors – that they had heard in their last port-of-call in Savannah, about a man nicknamed Black Sammy, who'd been hung at the Gallows in Suffolk. Was that the same man?

Captain McKinney mused out loud. "...maybe he's a dead man."

"A dead man" Cried Shaw to the people in the pub "A dead man, indeed, whose soul shall wander the seas, in search of shelter that shall be no more!"

A fate most horrid, indeed! It was a fate to be shared by most the scallions aboard!

"Ah, *The Seas and their calamities!*" Shaw sang to the pub.

"Please, tell me more about the treasure, sir." The boy asked Captain McKinney later that night, for it had transfixed itself in his mind all day, almost like a haunted thing.

"Well, it's an immense, legendary treasure trove located in the Caribbean where they say Captain Lawless had probably planted all his gold right before the Royal Navy captured his ship. Everyone in the world is looking for it, though no one knows exactly which island it's on, nor even where upon it."

"But, legend is - there was a map." Lawrence added.

"Yes, I heard that story too." Captain said.

"They say that Captain Lawless last words were:"

"I got that treasure so hid ye'll never find it without me!"

"Yes." Agreed our Captain.

"But, they say he was just trying to save his neck." Lawrence said.

"But it was never found, was it!"

"No sir, indeed, it was not."

And somehow the boy thought they were about to find out about all of that! And that's all he could think of all day. It was the lengths that grown men would go to to acquire the gold. Why?

Now that the storm had subsided the prisoners heard the pirates drag the larger chest across the deck. It contained the shipment of gold and silver that Captain McKinney had picked up from the Molasses fields. It could be then be traded for rum in Port Au Prince or Kingston, Jamaica and then used by the traders to purchase slaves off the Ivory Coast or, to run tobacco from 'Virginny' to Old England. The Mighty Trade Winds really determined how goods were sold, for they reliably blew the merchandise in ships across the great big Seas in a great oceanic triangle of trade.

The pirates, above, now had pried the strong box open and they a roared of greedy cries as they looked upon their new found fortune!

Then the First Mate said with such a scarry voice:

"Count the money ye numskulls, into the sack! Tally in yer logbook, Mortensen, ye henhearted bag of bones, no slipping coins ooop yer sleaves! Oy wesn't born yesterday, Bilge Rats! Tally yon jewelry in the log book, ye Cap'n favorites, thar'll be no fay-vors done in t' logbook, fer all ye suckers! Ye may be pleasin' the Cap'n on the quarterdeck, but don't yet forgets who runs the yards atop the masts!"

Minutes later there came a pounding sound. "Cap'n's a'coming!" someone said in a hush.

"It's as if ye had summoned him yerself, Mr. O'Shea!" cried Mr. Mortensen.

"Shut up, Morty, ye sire sucker!" he hissed.

All was quiet now in the overriding presence of the ship's master and only the clang of heavy pieces of gold could be heard as it was counted into the burlap sacks.

"What's the matter, Mr. O'Shea? Having trouble counting out the money out again?" Cap'n La Fourche insinuated.

"No sire!" Said the First Mate, Mr. O'Shea, so suddenly cheerful, loosing the scarry edge to his voice.

"Good, I'd hate to think my First Mate was bad-mouthing me again."

"Oh no sire!" he cried, all too cheerful once again. "Never, sir!"

And someone else muttered later on, between decks, such that only they, the prisoners could overhear: "Cap'n, Oy thinks the First Mate means to haerm ye sir!"

"How's that, Morty?"

"He pocketed ten pieces, sire, roight in front of us!"

"A bold act!" Captain whispered-out hoarsely, with fury, for it was such bold act that went against any and all piratical codes. Cap'n cried out: "I ought to run him through right now with me blade - fer mutiny!"

Morty answered back: "Captain, Oy thinks we should wait till we get closer to the island."

"I know!" Cap'n cried in vexation. Even with all the 'new' supplies taken from *The Saphire*, they were still running low on other black powder and shells should they run into the Royal Navy! And they needed all the talented hands that they could muster in Sea battles, even if those hands were mutinous hands, for their treachery was no greater than the Sea's herself!

"Morty, I've been captain of this ship ten years!" Cap'n cried. You could just feel the frustration in his voice.

"He's just jealous as 'ell, sire!"

The First Mate, O'Shea was at least eight years older than the Captain. He was stout and, frankly, an "oogly ol' brute" as someone later said. It were easy to see where the hatred had sprung from: it was dead, cold envy, for Cap'n La Fouche was a tall and most masterly captain, to be feared and admired above all.

"Fmmmmph!" cried the Captain.

"Oy guess sir, he wants to be the Captain, again!"

"Whut, so he can run us a'ground again!" Cap'n swore.

"It's too much!"

"He was voted out as captain over ten years ago, this March, sire!"

"Aye, Cap'n. But, he allows some of the crew to drink - on watch even! I believe he's secretly poisoning a group of them against you, sir."

"Find out who they are, Morty."

"Aye-Aye, sir."

"He never stops drinking; day and night he's at it! He's just a damned drunk!"

"Aye, that he is, Cap'n. That he is!"

Then the ship listed and swayed most indecisively. It seemed like a torrent was somehow rushing past the ship, sweeping them all deep into the Sea. Now the jaws of fate crunched down upon the prisoners below - of such a dangerous world they were now completely locked into, for their lots had been cast amongst murderous monsters and fiends! They were bloodthirsty creatures, unnaturally skilled in the usage of violences for their gains!

And the boy just wanted to cry and cry them all away. "He waere soooo yeng then!" Shaw cried.

Out of exhaustion the boy finally drifted off to sleep, on the cold, clammy side of the bulkhead. When he awoke and found that, again, Captain McKinney was still sitting straight up, alert and still on watch. His mark had stopped bleeding – it was most of what the boy could see of him in the dark. "Cap'n X." Chandler thought, somewhat darkly and unsure of his own loyalty now, for his once proud, fine captain was humbled and now just a prisoner, like he.

"We're headed South, Chandler," Said Captain, finally. How could he see in the dark, that the boy had awoken?

"How did ye know, sir?"

"Look at the shadows," He pointed and the boy looked up on the deck above, "They are to the starboard."

"Whe're we going, Captain?" asked the boy, his teeth chattering.

"Back onto the Golden Trail..." And with these chilling words the boy shuddered for fear. "...and back onto the Spanish Main."

"Captain, what'll become of us?"

"It's time to be really brave." is all Captain McKinney would answer.

"And, then, the roll of the open ocean began to ply its ways and sways and soon we ware far, far out to Sea." Sang Shaw.

The Saphire Presumed Lost at Sea

Shaw shifted back in his chair, kicked up his big boots on the spars of the table and took another swig of rum. No one dared utter a word about his hornary manners and he smiled, apparently knowing that he had them utterly enthralled into his tale.

"Little did we know that our ship had made front page headlines one month later in Norfolk, Virginny" and he pulled out of his coat a well-worn book entitled "The Square-Riggers Sail and Tackle Book" and between it's old pages was a folded a faded newspaper article. Mary Elizabeth took it, put it on the table and carefully read it with her glass.

"Can ye imagine me surpoise when I found this story on a bookshelf, Ma'am? This wares only after many, many years when I had, by mere chance, come to stay at the *Old Shellback's Inn* in Portsmouth, Virginia, and it was on a shelf with a collection of other historical bits that the Coastal Patrol had rescued from many foundering ships, including the deserted and mysterious *Saphire!* It wares everything I could do to not jump up and down in that pub and say: "Hey!! That was me varry own ship! I've kept that secret until this very day, folks."

Eye brows went up around the table.

"I read the article with some pleasure, folks for I was so relieved and happy that *The Saphire* had made it to safety. I tell ye, ships have a spirit, they do! I missed the old gal!"

"Aye, she'd become a local ghost legend, she had!" Shaw smiled, pleased with himself. "Even though it ware many years before I landed there, everyone in the town was still telling me all about it, for the whereabouts of her crew had become a huge mystery! And only I knew the full truth of what had become of the crew of the *Saphire!* Most had become pirates! But I didn't want to tell anyone of their lowly fate, so, I spake not of their true fate until this varry day."

Mary Elizabeth gave him back the yellowish newspaper, nodding, impressed with the veracity of Shaw's story. Everything else about Shaw, heretofore, had sounded somewhat fishy, but this story was apparently factual and boldly detailed. It was becomming clear to the audience that Shaw was really telling them his true life's story on board a pirate ship!

Shaw put on his delicate little spectacles, which made him look rather comical as he was a big swarthy man.

"Eeets from the Norfolk Toimes..." he carefully unfolded it and began: "November 21, 1727 by a Mr. Edward Capshaw. The title is *The Saphire Mystery...*"

"Why Meester Shaw, ye can read well." Walt said, eyes wide open in surprise.

"Aye, he said smiling. "I got me an edjee-cai-shin on board this new ship, *The Cyclone*. Oy'll tell ye abooot that later." And then he read the article aloud:

*"Captain Lawrence S. Jenkins of the
Royal Navy Brigantine HMS*

Vantage found the British Merchant Ship ‘The Saphire’ drifting and deserted off of Cape Henry, Norfolk, Virginia. His crew boarded her and discovered that no one was aboard. The late Captain of the Saphire, Captain Geoffrey M. McKinney of Bristol, had recorded his last log book entry on an impending attack by the infamous French Pirate, Captain Daniel La Fourche.

Evidence of a fierce battle was everywhere, the ships stores were looted, and the treasury of the ship, missing, though the whereabouts of the remaining crew is unknown.

Captain Jenkins took this logbook to the Governor of the Virginian Commonwealth, who then posted a fabulous bounty of a bar of gold on the head of Captain Daniel La Fourche, and any pirates conspiring with him.

Capt Jenkins pronounced the captain and crew of The Saphire captured, marooned or lost at Sea.

(Acres, D., E. (1721). *The Abandoned HMS Saphire Found! The Norfolk Times , II (i), 1.*)



The Captain's New Steward

"Back to *The Cyclone*." Shaw said and he folded his little spectacles and put them in his breast pocket and carefully tucked away his Seaman's book into his side pocket.

"Two long days passed in the dark, musty cargo hold, where, they could hear their new masters two decks above."

Captain McKinney developed a fever and he lay there silent and delirious; not keeping their lamps of hopes lit as he often had done in the past. Lawrence tended to him, while Chandler sat in the dark, brooding and chewing his nails to the quick. The clammy cold was so oppressive that it forbade him to feel any kind of hope of a good life beyond this dungeon that they were in. He 'lay to' bundled up in rags, towels and old pieces of sail cloth, aching for his old home in Bristol; where, there'd been a mother and father, two sisters and a baby brother. It had been a happy place before smallpox had taken them all away from him. His parents had died; the baby had been adopted by the Chief Constable's family; the girls went on to become servants, and, as many before him:

"Out to Sea Went He."

"The darkness played tricks on the boy's young mind. The Sea was not a bright, blue-eyed girl with pigtails – like his sisters. No, She had become a dark, brooding jungle of a Sea with ferocious predators swimming in the Seaweed all around!"

"And to rub it all in, The Sea, herself, then threw a violent set of storms at us. The prisoners rolled and flew about the hold wildly; completely demoralized! She hurdled barrels and crates all about the hold, throwing a regal tantrum so worthy of a queen!" As they sing:

Oh, The Sea and her savagery - the Seal!"

Days went by as they sat there in the dark and listened to the pirates, on the decks above, on good days, going about their days, as ordinary seamen would, swabbing and holystoning the decks, trimming sails and so on. It could have been any merchantman in those days that they overheard carrying out their duties that all sailors did. It was only in the afternoons and when the sails were set in steady, prevailing winds, that they could discern the seamens' true natures as they talked, fiddled, danced, drank, played spades and so on.

Each one had his own of colorful character that they seemed to have fashioned, almost as if for the stage, which seemed to be the main deck: There was One-Ear and Slimy, Pillow, Cabbage and Gallows-Goat, to name a few. It seems once they turned to this life of crime that they had permanently let go of their real, true and respectful names, identities and past lives. They had become something much more colorful, yet dreadful. They lived the part at times, as if for their own amusement, always playing the part of the villains and they were overheard by the prisoners below.

And sometimes, in the distance they could overhear the terrifying master of the ship giving them commands that they hustled to carry out. Even She, the ship, *The Cyclone*, seemed to perk up when the dark master was about. 'Here comes Cap'n, mates!' the crew would say, and they were always popping-to around the Captain and the ships slightly luffing sails then thumped with taughtness as the ship then 'turned-to' and Her sails moaned and sung into the wind and cut the waves smartly, as if to please.

The boy thought he might always be in the hold with the prisoners for he had spent days in the dim light; his only diversion was watching the pirates above, through extended seams and cracks, several decks above. Sometimes, when he was lucky, he could discern the voice of the immanent one, the Captain, and he wondered and wondered about him.

The Steward

Finally, just when the boy thought he could take no more, someone suddenly threw open the hatch which crashed against the deck, and light exploded into the hold.

"Git! Git up here, bo-woy!" screamed O'Mally, who hauled the boy up the ladder and into the light. The ship heeled at a steep angle and Chandler blinked heavily as he stood there blind and dumb as O'Mally barked "Hands tee-gethar!" and tied his hands in a knot with tarred twine and then tugged him along up the tilting companionway ladder to the great room. O'Mally knocked, and the boy suddenly found himself standing, unbelievably stunned and breathless before the great and fearsome Captain La Fourche!

Cap'n sat reclined back in his plush chair, with his right elbow braced on the red velvetine arm. He was leaning over it while holding his long brass spyglass with his left, intently studying every bit of puffing cumulus out the great cabin windows, astern. He didn't look up from this task as the two came in the compartment. His long legs were stretched out before him, his heavy boots were braced on the sill and he looked as if he'd been doing that all morning long. Cindahr, the Third Mate, stood at the chart table attempting to calculate navigational fixes with a divider and scowled as he looked up from the chart.

"Here's the bo-woy, as ordered, sorr." O'Mally unbound the knot. Captain La Fourche turned his head and with a savage look he inspected the boy, tip to toe. A shudder went through the boy as he did this.

"Serve Cap'n tea, bo-woy!" O'Mally snapped. It seemed to be some kind of a test, that, surely if he failed they'd throw him back 'in the brig' again for good. He tried hard not to mess up in the high, pitching seas.

The ship had 'heeled o'er' so; she suddenly breached in the heavy wells; the boy struggled to pour the tea into the cup, guessing at putting in two lumps of sugar and stirring it. He had to hold the saucer with two hands to proffer it to the Captain. To steady his head, he pretended that he was serving none other than the gracious Captain McKinney. O'Mally stood impatiently over the scene with crossed arms. Without another word, the boy began to prepare the meal on the slanting table set before him. He sliced up the fish into large pieces and buttered the hardtack with lard. With a flick of his right hand, Cap'n waved off O'Mally, who sniffed his departure, and the boy found himself all alone with the ferocious Captain and the Third Mate.

Chandler stood there in stunned silence not knowing what to do next. He was used to getting snapped at for loitering around, known as 'skylarking' or 'skatin.' Finally he realized that he could pour Cindahr a cup of tea. He brought it over to him at the chart table, and the Third Mate took it, grunting a reply.

As they drank their tea, they discussed a tack around the Straits of St. Barts, and the boy didn't understand a thing they'd said, for it was a strange and secret

language of the talk of the Sea and despite having worked for Captain McKinney for a few years, it still was a strange talk:

"Let's keep her at a 'close haul.'"

"Should we hove-to at sunset or keep running at a close reach?"

"Neigh, the trades are a'poiling 'gainst the stream.'

"Aye, aye, Cap'n."

What did it all mean? He didn't dare ask! He wondered if he would ever know!

Then the slender and quick Second Mate, Mr. Faerburne, came in. The boy went to find the cook to boil a second pot of tea. Braced against the chart table, Mr. Faerburne stood drinking his tea and joined in the lively discussion of the tack about the strait. He was a good looking blonde chap about 35, with a longish dark blonde mustache and goatee. He didn't seem to belong here, until one heard his wild Sea talk and pirate speak. But he was an accomplished sailor - and pirate.

They always seemed to be enjoying themselves in 'argy-ing' with Cap'n. It was a sport, like fencing, that they honed every day in open Sea. The favorite arguments were usually about: The best vineyards, the best ports-of-calls, and of course, the best bustlines in the known world.

After a long while of this they gossiped about various men aboard, like Captain McKinney and John Gordon. They talked a half hour about the First Mate who was asleep in his cabin, supposedly resting for night watch, although First Mates seldom worked the night watch on any ship on the Sea. They scowled something about him "sleeping the drink off the drink again." Then later the two mates went topside, to post the captain's orders, who stayed below, content to watch the clouds with his glass, most single minded.

The boy snuck glances at his captor, who, sensing this, would roll his eyes and blaringly ignore him all day, sitting in his great chair with the heals of his boots on the window sill, surveying a line of cumulus off the stern.

The boy would later learn that these were all downwind clouds, forecasting of the winds coming from behind them that would soon fill their sails and push their ship along. This was called downwind sailing, which most tallships used to harness the Trade Winds for weeks at a time. The Captain spent much of his time watching the clouds astern. The boy began to watch them, too, build and puff and then blow away with the Trade Winds, while the lady, *The Cyclone*, stretched her stays and creaked happily along, gliding along through the waves. At times Cap'n went topside to order the trim of luffing sails that could be heard flapping even from below, and then he would come back to sit in his chair, content again, but watchful like a big napping panther.

On fair days the prevailing winds were predictable and steady in their ways, your sails could be set for a smooth day of sailing and Rene would serve the captain, his officers and a few others lunch at a big table that he would rig up on the main deck. It was always a lively session and Captain led it like he did his ship, with boldness and charisma.

How the boy grew to admire them all, as he began serving their lunch, for they lounged at the table, in a majestically male and most powerful way, sitting cockily back, while the rest of the humble crew performed menial sailor chores all around them. The mates, of course, were especially larger than life and had the presence of true royalty of the Sea: There was the remorseless and acidic thirdmate, Mr. Cindahr; the quiet but cocksure blonde Second Mate, Mr. Faerburne; the charismatic and malevolent First Mate, Mr. O'Shea. But most magnificent and greater than them all was the wildly powerful and completely overriding Captain La Fourche. They were not a bit tamed. They were man at his most undomesticated and brutal best, for they radiated power like lions; they sat there in the sun and basked in its glory; satisfying our desires to be lead by the most fearless, most powerful - though brutal, *Lords of The Sea.*"

After lunch the officers often played spades or poker. Sometimes the First Mate even dared openly to pass around a tankard of rum and the occasion became even livelier. Then, at four bells, the fiddler, Chips, came back from his strenuous day's work on the yardarms, and he would screech wild Irish jigs, delightfully accompanied by Windman Mike on the calliope, Brer Umbrage on the penny whistle and Freddy O'Ggearney on the big drum.

And that's when René would usually pull the boy over for his own grub on the deck by the galley, where they both sat together and enjoyed the 'musique du mer".

Many a day, the midafternoon ushered in oppressive heat and the heavy doldrums would set in. Cap'n almost always grew greatly weary at this time and often went below, yanked off his boots and threw his greatcoat and blouse on the chair and dove head first onto his rack where he slept a deep sleep on his chest, his hair wildly askew on his back. He would take in heavy breaths like a man famished for deep sleep.

Chandler soon grew weary of watching his fierce new master and upon the cool hard wooden deck he would lie down and slept a weary good sleep, as well.

Early evenings often brought the return of stiff, fresh breezes and the crew bustling all about, climbed aloft to set various forestay sails that would help point closer to the wind throughout the night. Cap'n, hearing the bustle above, would arise and go topsides and stayed on deck with the crew for the rest of the day to get every bit of mileage that he could out of the sails. Cap'n seemed in a hurry to get some place - where, the boy knew not. Cap'n watched the sails, like a seahawk, never letting them sag or luff in slackening winds, for another angle could improve the mileage of the sails. On this particular day Cap'n left the room without disturbing the sleeping, growing, young boy who lay sprawled out, belly down on the deck of his compartment. Though he was deep asleep Chandler heard Cap'n snicker as he stepped over him and headed topsides.

The winds now blew strong but variable breezes and the crew spent all day ‘wearing ship’ as they adjusted to the indecisive winds through the many angles of sail, but the ship made steady progress that day.

Shaw cried “Well, *Hall-ley-loo!*”

“But, on this day the sail handling was all but a dream to the boy, who wearily dreamt that he was carrying out Cap’n’s orders all afternoon, working hard as he soundly slept!

“Belay that bracing, and belly up topsides for t’ Royal top gallant, bow-oy!” and aloft he climbed in his dreams, and even the mast swung athwartships as in real life! And even chantees were sung by the crew aloft around him as they swung both to and fro, as he looked a hundred feet below to a swing deck beneath.”

The boy awoke hours later sweating and startled to find himself not straddling aloft on a spar, but all alone in the Captain’s space laying belly down out in the middle of Cap’n’s deck, After a few minutes of dopey panic, he decided to sneak up to the galley where, he found the cook, René, who seemed most kind in nature, stirring a shark stew.

“Did ye sleep good?” teased the cook without lashing him.

“Oh, yessir!” he said, scared. “I’m varry sorry, seer!”

“Oh, that’s okay. D’accord.” Rene winked.

“Is the Cap’n mad?” he said, anxious and looking around.

“No.”

“How do ye know it, sir?”

“Cuz, he just joked to me aboot yer snoring. He said it would be a great use as fog ‘orn in bad wetter.”

“I’m so relieved he’s not mad!”

“Naw he knows yer still a growin’ boy, kid, and all that growin’ makes ye qoyte toired!”

“Yessir, it does!” his bones seem to ache as when he grew in great big spurts. He always seemed to be weary these days when he’d awake and be sizes bigger! And he was bursting out of his clothing!

And then he was having to find new clothes all the time. There was one thing positive about piracy - after an attack he could, at least, get proper clothing. He remembered his own real father being a big man - looks like he was growing big too!

Another thing the boy noticed, there seemed to be plenty of hands to tend to every aspect of life at Sea, and no one here seemed to be particularly upset about an occasional bit of ‘skatin’ aboardship. In fact they were all gearing up for their fiddling and dancing once again, as the winds were becoming steady and favorable, from the North.

“Jest don’t let the First Mate catch on to yer nappin’.” The cook leaned over and whispered into his ear, while looking around for eves droppers.

“Oh?”

“He ain’t as good nay-tured as Cap’n La Fourche!”

“Really?” This was news to the boy. ‘Good natured as the Cap’n?’

"Oui, my boy, oui."

He would have thought just the opposite since Mr. O'Shea seemed to be always napping! Also, O'Shea was very gregarious and personable with all the crew, while Captain La Fourche sometimes seemed dark and brooding - and, he was known as a monster of the Seas - everywhere! How could this be true! But Chandler decided he was too hungry to figure this out right now!

"Yep. Ye'll see, Chandler, about our Cap'n." he whispered.

"Did ye need me help, Mister René?" Chandler said but then spied the hot stew and he somehow swallowed as he spoke.

"Yes, but first, have a li'ol taste, mate, make sure eeet's goooood n' 'ot." Said the cook, ladling him a bowl. He had fat, but kind hands, Chandler noticed. And he had a jolly good smile. And he thus felt much better as he ate the hot gruel.

"Thank you, sir!"

The cook winked back. He had a fat and round face. It made the boy quite happy;

Chandler's legs buckled and he rather fell down on the rolling deck of the galley, to eat it. The cook laughed.

"Ah...yummy!" the boy gasped, looking up to the cook, smiling.

"Glad ye loike eeet." René seemed delighted to have his company and he told him many stories and limericks as the boy dug in to his chow. Things could be worse!

So, the boy found himself in the exact same position he'd been in before on *The Saphire* - he served the Captain his chow and stood the odd dog watch in calm seas; He often assisted the cook, carpenter, or the boatswain with the tackle. He often snuck Captain McKinney and Lawrence, who were still shackled below, with extra food, and especially limes which helped them both recover from wounds. And the boy kept his former captain abreast of the crew, informing him of who seemed to be just going along with the impressment of the pirates, or, who had really become *one of them*.

Days went by, and Chandler found himself many times with Captain La Fourche and his officers hanging about, having tea in the greatroom. Sometimes he ignored them and stared out the great cabin window, like a panther watching and awaiting. His eyes were dark, watchful, and cold, surmising his officers, saying little, just watching. He didn't have to say anything with thoses eyes. All he had to do was look at one of them and they conceded to his will. Obviously they respected him much.

Chandler poured Cap'n rum or red wine at times, other times he fetched books from the great Sea chest, which to the boy's surprise, were in both French and English, had long titles, and few pictures.

The boy tried to keep in mind the cook's favorable words about the Captain, but he was very scared of the man. Probably because both Cap'n and René were both French and so that's why they got along, for the boy just couldn't see that Cap'n was

"good natured" about anything! Rather, Captain La Fourche was a brooding monster, or, say a Cyclone aboot to pounce ashore at any time!

And, the slightest puff of wind through the great windows and any seaman on the main deck could hear Cap'n's boots a'pounding all the way up from the greatroom to the quarterdeck, where he would check that things ware being run flawlessly. And mates would whisper "Heyre comes Cap'n!" Silence reigned on deck when he got up there. Then he demanded them with crossed arms "Look lively, Scallows! Adjust the tops'le line! Quitcher lolly gagging! Do ye wanna be out her forever, Multree? Oh, Lordy, where's Skully? Git him oop heyre! Hey, fix the top knot! Pull in the main rigging!" A cloud of cirrocumulus would lollygag high overhead and Cap'n glanced up and would impatiently wear and brace the sails, accordingly, as to catch every breath and utterance of the wind. He read the clouds like an atlas or like a story book to Sea.

And, Cap'n climbed the masts many times a day, and often raced the younger hands, like Gallows Goat, to the top. About once a mid-morning, he often dueled on the main deck with a young and trim shipmate named Nico, the only other French pirate other than the cook, René. All the pirates gathered around them and, drenched with sweat, he cussed him:

"Foight fer yer food, Nico, or I'll put ye off *rations*!"

"Oui, Monsieur Capitain!" Cried Nico.

"Arrrre ye really a Frenchman, Nico? Then get that blade ooop and the butt down! Shall I poke ye in the derriere! Git yer butt down!" he stepped over a lightly kicked the kid in the rear.

"Non, Monsieur Capitain! Non!"

"Mon Dieu!"

Jab! Jab! Jab! Cap'n was a relentless force!

The crew roared, stomping their boots in unison, while Cap'n danced around Nico on the deck, yelling insults or correcting form. He was invincible!

"Forget I'm the Capitain, Nico! Try to kill me, ye bastard! Try t'kill me, I order ye!" and he jabbed at him, pushing him backwards against the helm. Nico faught back with a tiny measure of skill.

But with one great swipe Cap'n knocked the foil right out of Nico's hand which flew across the deck and swiveled into the scully. He pinned the young man against the helm!

"Got ye!" he cried, poking him lightly in the arm.

"Aaaaaaaah!" Nico cried.

"Aaaaaaaah!" Cap'n mocked him and pulled his foil back, crying "*Touché!*"

And everyone on deck clapped their hands.

And then Cap'n waved him off with his sword and strode up to the bow, giving orders to trim the jibesail as he went. René came over to examine young Nico's arm, who gasped for breath, while following the Cap'n's steps to the bow, with his eyes opened wide: No one could beat him!

On the rare days when Nico could actually get in a jab, he was invited down for a glass of port in the great room, where they celebrated and spoke in French, which

the boy didn't understand, but he guessed that Cap'n actually kept a sharp eye on the crew through poor young Nico.

B.

The Atlantic Gyre

Days went by of this same routine, as the pirates sailed from _____ to _____; each day was longer and longer and sweatier and sweatier. Nerves were frayed like worn chaffing gear and argument was the course of the day. One day Chandler came back into the great room to find Lateen and Cindahr drunk and arguing over fixes on the chart, bickering and pushing each other around the compartment. To his great astonishment, he found the Cap'n in his big chair stripped to only his boots n' leggings, revealing a chest of black fur and his long hair fell way past his arms, disheveled. His arms dangled limp to the deck, on both sides of the chair as his mates argued on and on. It startled Chandler to see the Cap'n so unfit. But he wasn't drunk; he just looked feverish and dazed.

"Cap'n?"

"Hmmmmm?"

"Tea, Cap'n?"

"No..."

"Chow?"

"No."

He looked up to the boy – almost startled – and over to his mates, then his head lolled back against the chair in a daze, hopelessly staring out the great cabin window.

"We're in the dead waters." Captain McKinney explained to Chandler as soon as he came down the ladder to the dark hold, without preamble or even a greeting.

Chandler caught his breath - The Dead Waters?

"We're in the Atlantic Gyre."

The GYRE...what was that? It sounded scary.

"In these latitudes that's where the doldrums and the gyres lie." said Captain.

Shaw took a gulp of rum, the memories were fresh and startling still and he almost sang as he said:

"The wurd 'gyres' startled the young boy with its noise, with its clamor, with its dread. And when noight had came, the noightmaere creatures all came out, and, tharr amongst the drreadful, floating seaweeds, they staged their dramas, which ware con-fab-u-lay-ted by the many Sea-tales told by the crew in the foc'sle most every noight. The tales harkened back to a toime, in the past, when the boy had been too young to comprehend them as mere stories. And, as the dark-toime began to come on he would fell asleep on his mat, on Cap'n's deck, and dreamed of a toime, a toime so long ago and so very distant - a toime of monsters who spooked the Seas -- and the Captain and his mates belonged to all of them!"

"And when he awoke at dusk, he awoke with a dread of *The Sea*. Amen."

Into the Desert Seas

Every time they boy went down into the hold, Captain McKinney would question the boy at length about the very nature of Captain La Fourche, for the boy had been around the pirate captain as much as any of the three mates, and had witnessed much of the wily scheming and plotting in the great cabin.

"What is the captain like?" he often asked.

"Um... Captain's a frightful man." Is what the boy answered, being so young and ignorant of the hearts of men. He had already had forgotten Rene's kind words about Cap'n being 'good natured' for they had not seemed true to him.

"In what way do you mean, Chandler? Have you seen how he treats them? Is he rough on them?"

"Well, no sir, but, well... nobody disagrees with him - ever."

Menace was the word. Nobody messed with a man of such menace.

"Aye." Captain McKinney said, leaning back, thoughtful, in his makeshift rack by the barrels. "Tell me about the First Mate - does he ever offer suggestions on a course or a tack?"

"Oh, yes, Meester O'Shea does, indeed, carefully, sir."

"Oh?"

The boy struggled to put words to his observations: "Captain's seems loike he always keepin' the First Mate on his toes."

"I see."

Shaw began to regale:

"Then, the long days of summer Seas caeme and went loike a sentence; and they woiped their brows and sweated them through, as the brennishing sun shone down and beat their skin leather-tan and they grabbed any leeward winds they coulda foind."

"Decension ran rampant like rats in sewers: all ware a'treachery brewing, mates in these delirious, sweltering, mutinous Seas!"

"Then the noights of the tropics woulda come! Awh, the mad crimson o' the dipping red sun-ball shone the whales tales flappin' aft in the distance, dropping to the belowdecks of the Sea while the pirates drank their rum roight through, I saw it, to make it through these *desert Seas*!"

The audience in the pub let Shaw get a gulp of water, to clear his throat. He looked around as he did; some were leaning forward eagerly awaiting the return to the story and he smiled with satisfaction as a fisherman does when he has a goodly, strong tug on his line!

"How was it that I was so yeung to be with men of such woirldly accomplishments like these?" Shaw said, scratching his wiry dark beard. Though it was many years before, the memories of his early days at Sea were still very fresh to him.

[move this:] "Not a ship within a shout!" Muttered the First Mate, and then he climbed up the lines to get a view fer himself and probably to gossip with his tight mates, in his high court upon the royal yardarms, a hundred swaying feet above.

The Cook's Tale:

"René, the cook, the only other crewmate other than Nico who spoke to the Cap'n in French, probably had Cap'n's trust the most. Sometimes while he cooked in the galley, he mused upon the nature of their Cap'n with the boy.

Cap'n seemed to belong to a different world than the rest of us crew and it perplexed the boy some, for, he wondered what was Cap'n doing out here in the middle of the Sea with such a rabble of gold-mad lunatics?

"Cap'n seems very confident of himself..." he started a topic.

"He should, he be 'Le Capitain.'" René spoke in a jolly mixture of French and Bristol English patois.

"I mean, he is not like the others...he is more..."

"...masterly.." René pronounced with flair, whipping a fork up over the stew like a conductor of a big 'sim-foe-knee.'

"Aye, sir, that's it! I can imagine he's been in the Royal Navy... or, the master of... something beeeg."

The cook laughed heartily at this, "Aye, Lad! He ware both! He ware in the Royal Naivy and, he's the bastard son of Captain James Merritt-Masterson, the famous explorer and the gov'ner of the huge sugarcane plantation on Santee."

"Oh!"

"His father gave the plantation to his half brouthare to run - the woife's son - and cut Daniel and his sisters out like a knoife! He ain't nare forgave him, me thinks. Looks just like his father, he does - he was hard to hoide from the woorld!"

Shocking! Most shocking indeed! His new masterful captain was a... a bastard! Unfathomable! It took some time for this to sink in to the boy who sat on the deck as the cook merrily stirred his stew in the cauldron in the galley. Captain didn't seem like an outcast or a misfit, he didn't seem cursed nor...doomed to ignobility... how was it that he wielded such a large presence if he was born so downcast? He glanced aft. The captain stood boldly on the stern with his thumbs stuck cockily in his belt, teasing Mr. Cindahr on the stern about the slightly drooping sails, and even the acidic third mate was laughing. There was nothing downcast about Cap'n at all! He had overcome much. And yet the boy was sad, for no man should be thrown down just for being born wrong. How could anyone have chosen their own birth? It seemed such injustice!

"How he got out here?" he finally asked the cook for the story.

"Cap'n ware twelve yers old and a'walking down a pier in Bristol, a'looking fer he's real father's ship, when a ship's gang impressed – or kidnapped him - into the Royal Navy, onboard *The HMS Minster*. Ten years later, he became the Captain of the bark, *The Sceptor*, himself!"

"What a story!"

"He ware noigh twenty-eight!"

"Aye, one day I'll tell ye another story and how came I onboard." And he bowed slightly, his storytelling ending for now.

"How...?" Chandler asked. But the cook had porridge to boil and would only say with a turn for verse and a sailor cuss: "Blast...and off to the Navy went he - to become master of men, wind and The Sea!"

The Pirate Kingdoms

The boy began to eat better, for, he had gotten on the good side of the cook; and they often together conspired to ‘tasting’ it - sneaking spoonfuls of food left and right, ‘Just be sure’ he joked to the kid; or “better make sure eet’s good-n-hot!” René was rather round for a seaman, but because he was also so good natured, the crew tolerated him much (also because he stayed away from their rum). And, during the long, Southerly sail neither the boy nor the cook got bone-thin like some of the living skeletons on board. Together they enjoyed these calm seas, up on deck, at the waist, by the galley, where they beheld a good view all about. “It ware a great chance fer the landlubbin’ sailor like our boy Chandler to get his ‘sealegs” Shaw said “...and to get his love o’ the Sea when she weren’t full of a darn gurl’s treachery!”

At six bells some of the crew began holystoning the main deck, while they sang their jolly sailor songs. Chips, the carpenter was a first rate fiddler and he knew every Irish song there was, it seemed. Windman Jones with his calliope brought out the not only the correct tune, he also helped support the crewmen who sang harmony and thus the ship resounded richly chorus on most fair days. Sometimes when they sang the ship was joined by porposes launching aloft upon the bow wave. One time a pod of right whales splashed athwartships, as if the music haunted them too from deep fathoms beneath. “Oy oft’n wondered aboot the mermaidens far below.” Shaw smiled and, too, jibed them with his Seamagic, as well.

The songs never seemed to bother the officers nor Cap’n much, in fact, they sometimes came out of deck in the afternoons to sit and listen.

“The wily *Cyclone* cut through the seas most pleasantly those days. And while the porridge boiled, the cook relaxed, telling the boy some of the histories of the men all around him: of how O’Shea, Cindahr, Mortenson came to be aboard. The boy learned of the many seas, lands and peoples that they’d seen on their trip to India and of the many ships and seabattles they’d fought, while overtaking the lumbering galleons upon the Spanish Main...”

“How long you been out here, Mr. René?

“Near twenty yeer!”

“A long time!”

“No kiddin’ - kid!”

He scratched his ear. “And I seen a lotta things out here, kiddo!”

“Don’t ye ever miss yer home in Normandy? Yer family?”

“I no have family n’more, kid.” He swallowed.

“Neither have I, Meester René.”

“Ah, poor lad.” He coddled.

“It seems like we’re all orphans out here.”

“Oui! Most are!”

“Even our captain.”

“Oui! Even our capitain, indeed!”

“With all this gold, don’t ye just want to go home, Mr Rene?”

"The crew really has a few port homes!"

"Really? Whe're they?"

"Oh, Nassau, Kingston, Key Largo, Port Royal, of course and St. George's Island off the coast of Madagascar! These are all pirate havens!"

"Why, not just go back to France?"

"Why, lil mate, to go back home is to go the gallows!"

The boy sat there, stunned.

And Shaw said sadly "I swallowed hard when I heard that, fer I was sad fer them, fer despoite their great riches they could nare go home anymore! What waere riches if ye couldn't take 'em home? Alas, they were vagabonds t'Sea. Then later, as I stayed on board with this crew longer, I had taken this sad news up in soilence fer them, and, then, soon as me yeung brain thought of it -- fer meself, too, having been thrown in with this lot! Would I be considered a poirate too? Would I belong to this utter world of Seamonsters t'Sea? Could I ever go home again? But then, I didn't have a home anymore either."

But the cook just merrily stirred the pot, oblivious that he could sail straight off the edge of the known world and not even know it, for he was consigned to this life to Sea and constant sail. Indeed, he was shipwrecked to Sea; it was his home and his doom. He was to be out here to the very end, for how could he ever get away?"

"Don't look so sad, boy, we jest loooove our pirate havens."

"Pirate havens!" he cried. "I had nare heard of sich a thing!"

"Aye, Lil' Mate!" he always called the boy, making him feel important. "That's where one sack, jez one sack of a ship, and tharr's all the gold, rum 'n goirls ye could ever want - fer the rest of yer loife!"

"Really?"

"Isn't that so, Meestair O'Shea?" cried the cook, suddenly looking over his shoulder. The boy flinched, for behind them had stood the First Mate in the breach of the hatch, arms folded, secretly listening to them talk the whole time. Then, he came forwards into the galley and boldly took a spoonful of the steaming pouridge. Only the First Mate or Captain could do ever such a thing, for most food and water was carefully rationed at Sea. Even the cook had to look over his shoulder to sneak spoonfuls to 'taste' it!

"Aye! A little bit of geld and all the goirls and rum ye could everrr want!" he winked at the boy. "Ah, Paul, soup's not too bad today!"

"Fresh fish today, Marcus."

"Aye! That they arrrrrrre!"

Somehow there was danger in the First Mate with every action that he ever did, whether sipping the porridge or, climbing a mast to talk secretly to the watch on duty up there. Treachery was everything on him and in him; it was everything he would ever be. He was a renegade, a rebel. But, curiously enough, it also seemed that he considered himself to be a great lover as well, for he would often speak of his great beauties: "Awh... My Lenora was my Lover-lady, or, shoot, Rosie Talmadge, Desiree

Allee, Beatrice LeMonde, and Esmerelda Encantada..." They were all world famous whores in Port Royale.

"Chandler, Meestair O'Shea owns a big tavern in Port Royale with seven beautiful gurls werkin' it."

"Ah! Me Seven Wunders of the Woirld!" he said still sipping on the stew. "I've got to get back to me goirls, Paul, and to me playce! I hope it's still all tharr!"

"Why came ye out here, sir?" the boy asked rather boldly, as the First Mate seemed approachable and sober that day.

"Oy needed the geld..." O'Shea answered in almost a chant. And he told them of the fire in his pub. And so, again, '*Back to the Sea went He.*' O'Shea sang, there in the galley.

'Aye! *Back to the Sea went He.*'

As the men spoke of treasure, their eyes drifted to the horizon, in a day dream world.

O'Shea began to descroibe Port Royale:

"It's a poirate kingdom, bo-woy, fabled for good toimes! The infamous Madame, Brennda, known worldwoide as '*The Countess of Chardonnay,*' ruled her large house up there on Main Street and a man knew no limit of pleasure at her palace - as long as his pockets *brimmed* with geld! Port woine or rum flowed down the streets at toimes! Tharr waere legendary brawls; the music nare stopped, nor the drenk, nor the games, nor the goirls! It ware a pirate kingdom with no rules, other than:

*'Get the gold,
drenk the drenk,
foight the foights!
It's a MAN'S town!'*

Shaw, rubbed his beard, as if still considering such things:

"But, ye know what folks, I hadn't been old enough t' know the whiles of the drenk, nor the bewitchery of the dames, nor the sea-duck-shin of it all to savvy their desire for the '*Pirate Havens.*' For, in that vurry instant - as the old First Mate giddily spoke about his whores, while in the galley - I realized that I had already set my course to become a worthy man of the likes of Captain La Fourche, instead!"

And had he? There, before them, at the head of the table sat Shaw, a large, swarthy and charismatic man, burly and undomesticated at his best. Maybe he had attained his dream? He had said once that he had been a captain of a ship, and they were sure of that from that point onward, but, what else had he become?

The River in the Sea:

As they sailed South, many days passed like this: the morning had pleasant seas that turned into stormy, oppressive afternoon doldrums. Chandler noted that some days Cap'n did not even rouse out of bed until four bells and when he did get up, he lolled about as if in a daze. It was a bit alarming. It almost seemed like he was under a curse in these lower latitudes. Some days Chandler brought his meals to him in bed, as if he had a fever; all of which he promptly reported back to Captain McKinney.

Whenever he snuck below he noted that, in contrast, Captain McKinney would always be already sitting up alert, as if he expected Chandler. "How is he today, Chandler?"

"Not good, sir, he's still in bed."

"Still in bed? It's so late. Is he sick?"

"No sir. Later on in the day he always duels with Nico qoyte well."

"He's only been like this in dead calm Seas?"

"Aye, Captain."

"Ah, I see."

Captain McKinney sat there fingering his scraggly beard, thinking and finally he said.

"I have an idea to help him."

"You do, sir? You want to help *HIM*?"

"Yes, I do, Chandler. All's I want you to do is to repeat these exact words to him: 'Captain McKinney would like to share an idea he has, with you, about the gyre that we're in, if you have some time'"

"Yessir."

"Repeat it back to me."

And he did: "Captain McKinney wants to..."

"Would like to" Captain McKinney corrected. "It's very important to say it exactly like I told you to, Chandler. It gets the tone just right."

"Aye, sir." and he repeated it a few times back to Captain McKinney until he got it exactly right, and then, with great trepidation, he went up the companionway to the Captain's great room, knocking gently on the door, and then, letting himself in carefully.

Again, the Captain was lying in bed. His hand was on his forehead and he stared, listlessly out to Sea. As the boy approached him, he turned his sharp eyes on the boy, who stopped in his tracks, trying to remember the words he was supposed to say.

"What are ye doing, sneaking up on me, bo-woy!"

"Sir...?"

"What do ye want?" he snapped and then rubbed his eyes.

"Captain McKinney..."

"What about him!"

"Wants to...would like to ... um... share an idea... he has with you... um, about the gyre that you're... we're in."

"Oh?" Cap'n said and his eyes narrowed in suspicion. But, the boy noted that he then sat right up. He rubbed his eyes for a minute and turned to him:

"Thinks he knows better than I, eh?"

Chandler froze and untangled this from his tongue "...wants to help, Sir...when ye have toime, sir."

"Humph!!" Cap'n said, but, then leaning forward to get up, he stopped and surmised the kid, panther like. "Ah! What the hell!" And he arose and stretched, suddenly towering over the kid, commanding: "Get me clothes, kid, me food and coffee! Afterwards I'll have Nico bring him up, in irrons."

"Aye-Aye, Cap'n." And the kid bustled about doing all that.

When Chandler returned with the food, he found Cap'n had dressed in his topcoat, had brushed his long black hair into a tie, and had trimmed his goatee. He sat at the table ready to eat. It was a dramatic transformation. The First Mate knocked and came in while Cap'n wrote in his logbook.

"O'Shea, tell Nico to fetch Captain McKinney in fetters" he said without looking up.

"Sir?"

"Ye heard me!" He snapped the tip of the nub off the pen he was so mad.

"Aye, Captain!"

Poor Captain McKinney had to be hauled in by both Nico and Mr. Faerburne, he was so week and dizzy. The trio clumsily came into the great room and Captain, who was sitting and eating, looked up shocked and stricken. "Chandler get him some chow!" He waved the other two off with his fork.

Capt McKinney swooned into the chair and tottered dizzily over his plate, whispering weakly a prayer of gratitude:

"Thank you, my Lord! I knew you'd hear me! Amen!"

And the good captain began to eat ravenously the food set before him. He shakily attacked the corn gruel and fish and weakly held the cup to his mouth; all the while being intently watched by Captain La Fourche. The 'X' on his left cheek was still clearly visible, and perhaps it would always be. His beard was ragged and filthy. He didn't look at all like he'd ever been the captain of a ship, but rather an untoward sailor, one of the many, just biding he's time to Sea; and only his bearing and carriage would make anyone realize that this was none other than the top officer of a ship that sat there eating, dressed in rags.

Cap'n La Fourche just stared at him the whole time with his mouth open, clearly disturbed.

Finally Cap'n uttered "I apologize for how we have treated you!"

McKinney nodded as he ate.

"Get him some rum!" And he poured McKinney a glass, himself.

Captain had me go to the cook for more, fresh chow and he kept eating. Captain La Fourche watched him intently the whole time. After a long while Captain

McKinney seemed a distant semblance of himself. The boy took the plate away and poured him more rum.

And the Captain leaned back in his chair "This shouldn't have happened to you, Captain McKinney."

"Yessir."

And Cap'n sighed and then crossed his arms, leaning back in his chair, tapping his foot and finally said: "Alroight, what's this business aboot the gyre?"

"Yessir, Capt McKinney said, whiping his mouth and pushing his plate away. The boy grabbed it up and put it all by the hatch, and sat down on the deck cross-legged to study all this - he could take the dishes back to the galley later.

"As Seaman Chandler can tell you, Captain, we had the same thing happen to us almost exactly a year ago, and, in the very same latitude."

Chandler nodded. Cap'n La Fourche glanced at him for a half second.

"Wait a minute, you've been below for weeks, how do you know what's going on?" and he turned suspiciously to Chandler.

But McKinney answered him plainly. "But Captain La Fourche, I can see the stars from the cracks in the hatch, and besides, I know these waters. We've been drug in a circle for a week."

The pirate captain just stared at him.

"We're in the Atlantic gyre now."

Chandler spooked and mystified, again, by the word 'gyre,' sat studying them in stone silence and so Cap'n reached across the table and poured McKinney one more drink, himself.

Captain McKinney swallowed it carefully, like his throat was sore. "As I said, I know these waters. They are bounded by a great current in the Sea, which has a peculiar sound to it – rather like a river flowing on by."

A memory came back to the boy vividly: one of the night watches McTavish, had called out "River to the Starboard side!"

Everyone had laughed except the captain, who came rushing up on deck, "Shut Up, crew! Where, McTavish!

The watch pointed in the Starboard direction.

The crew ran to the gunwhale and gazed, overboard, where they indeed heard a river frothing and flowing by in the middle of the ocean. Everyone gasped. How could that be! Was it *The Leviathan of the Deep* from the scriptures? Were they all going mad? Would not anyone not explain this stuff to the boy before he went daft!!

Cap'n recalled: "We heard it a fortnight back. Everyone laughed but I gave Mc Tavish a mug of me own rum."

"It's a great current out that bounds the gyres and..."

"I know - I know, the Gulf Stream Current." Cap'n said, impatiently waving the other off with his wrist. "Look, Captain McKinney, I've been out here over twenty year."

"Well then, you know we've been swept to the lee side of the Gulf Stream by the storm."

"Aye." Cap'n rolled his fingernails on the plush red velvet of his captain's chair, impatiently.

"...and you've swung into the many semi-circulars eddies in the middle of the Atlantic Gyre."

"Roight."

"And now you need to get out and head South."

Cap'n nodded. "We haven't a breath of wind in order to bring her about."

Chandler watched the two captains appraise each other - Captain La Fourche was leaning back and rubbing his goatee with finger and thumb, while Captain McKinney was looking over the brim of his cup at him. They were equals.

Finally Cap'n La Fourche broke the silence. "Pardon me, Captain McKinney, but what's all this to you?"

"Well, that's very easy, Captain La Fourche, I'm on the ship too; I have a stake in things as well. Look, I would like to get home one day to my wife and family!"

"Yes, of course."

"It's in my best interest to be expedient in this manner."

"Okay."

"Look Captain La Fourche, several years ago, when we were leaving Norfolk, a Nor'Easter also swept us into the middle of the Atlantic gyre. We struggled with it for weeks, too. Our water provisions were getting low, when a Dubliner – he was quite a bird watcher, he got the idea to follow the Arctic Terns, who were migrating North to the fisheries off Halifax. He said to me, "Surely Captain they know where *they're* goin', Captain." For we had heard that these birds do travel the entire whole world from pole to pole. They fly, yearly, some eighteen thousand nautical miles! They are greater navigators than you and I will ever be! He put it so well and it was a splendid idea, really, so we rowed our ship, tugging her into the current and slowly we began to follow the birds into the middle of the Gulf Stream. Following them kept us due North and thus, finally into downwind sailing. Off Cape Hatteras, we simply tacked about and proceeded to the western side of it and to the Southerly Coastal Current, where the downwinds were always to our favor."

"Sail north?" that was the opposite direction and into their enemies' seas.

"I know, and it seems contrary, but it worked. One has to post a watch to listen for that 'river' sound at all times – it's the very edge of the great Gulf Stream Current. Then you just sail into 'the river' and let it push you back north towards Cape Hatteras, which sticks way out Eastward, which actually helps you to tack around back Southward."

"Okay." Cap'n said, convinced and, I think, impressed.

"May I see a chart, Captain?"

"Chandler," Cap'n commanded with his pipe in hand "Get him whatever he needs." The boy pulled various charts and compasses out of the drawers, and the two tacticians both leaned over it. As the boy watched, they discussed the prevailing winds, the shoals, the sand bars adjacent to the low marshy islands off the Carolinas and, of course, the fortifications along the Carolina Seaboard.

When they finished Cap'n handed McKinney a pipe and they both lit up. Then Cap'n told Chandler to go get René, whom he told, in French, to rig up good rack. After the cook brought it, Cap'n gestered to the cot, quipping: "I only hope you don't snore." Cap'n smiled nonchalantly while grabbing McKinney's chains and rigging up his fetters to one of the ribs of the ship.

"Thank you Captain." he said, clanking down, on the cot. He looked exhausted.

Cap'n told Chandler "Get René to fetch him blankets and such. Give him a wash and shave basin. Grab him some new clothes from the slopchest. Fix anything that ails him." He left topsides. So the boy got René who had him get a bucket of Seawater and soap, and let Captain McKinney wash up. Then the boy gave his beard a trim, which took so long even with René's many instructions from the side, saying "Soon bo-woy ye'll be doing this for yerself." And the boy felt his chin for the wires that would hopefully soon come, but there were none, his face was still as soft as a girl's cheek, whereas Captain McKinney's face bristled with coarse reddish hair like a boar's back.

"Oy need't worried!" Shaw quipped while fingering his coarse black beard upon his face in the pub. "I've got me toooo much now!" and his audience chuckled warmly, for it was hard to imagine that Shaw had ever had smooth skin. "Oy've got me a jungle on me faice!"

When Cap'n came back in, Captain McKinney was all lathered up, but he asked politely: "Captain, my first mate, Lawrence, still suffers below decks. He is a goodly man and he can be trusted as I can, Captain La Fourche."

Cap'n nodded and then ordered Faerburne to move Lawrence up to the crew's decks and then he called O'Shea in to give him Old Sander's billet as a leadman on the foremast, a well-known position of honor, and basically to retire Old Sanders to become an idler with Chips, the ship's carpenter. From this effort Chandler gathered that Cap'n rather liked these poor guys, the prisoners, which included himself.

After a long time of grooming, Chandler decked his old Captain with pillows, and blankets. He gave him a cup of hot broth and poor Captain McKinney collapsed there, all clean and well fed, sleeping much of the rest of the day.

Cap'n La Fourche had been up on quarterdeck with all the new and controversial Northerly orders, and they were bickering about it some time before the ship began to tack North, but when Cap'n made up his mind, he got his way, despite the well-known democracy of the pirate crew. The boy was glad, for these orders seem to make sense.

Two days later, the kid was on deck right after three bells, when the sails suddenly came alive and began to flap and pop, luffing and finally alive again. The Second Mate ordered the rigging braced and *The Cyclone*'s sails soon began to hum with taughtness, known as sail song. Seeing and hearing this, the crew began to cheer as *The Cyclone*, herself:

"began to loll and curtsy her skirts, picking up her heals and grabbing the winds by their tails. And then She began to heel gracefully into the steady trades,

which, days later swept them back onto their Southernward way. And well on the way, Cap'n gave Captain McKinney some of his finest tobaccy, grown in Virginny, fer that, mates."

Seadreams

Shaw continued:

"Chandler was in a funny place, now, for he wasn't a man; nor was he a child. Inside, he was ungainly and uneducated; outside, he grew big and meaty arms. His hands had almost doubled in size and they were big, meaty hooks attached to his shoulders with tree-like branches for arms. He'd gone through a couple of sizes of boots in a month and had to trade off things with Mortensen in the slopchest for new shoes. Rene's good friendship had helped supplement this staggering growth rate by feeding him well. Chips had called for him, to help climb up on the foremast to help heave a new spar on the foremast, for they always called for the strongest, burliest men on those kind of hauling jobs.

Yet the bigger he became the more trouble he had asking basic questions about things, for he was supposed to be a 'man' now – or so he thought. Though Chandler didn't know it, most of the crew saw through all this youth and they pampered him much on basic things. He had trouble asking them, for instance, about what the two captains meant about '*The Gyre*'. As a 'man', he wasn't supposed be afraid of such spooky stuff. It didn't help that the crew took turns every night at 'pulling yarns' or telling their mythologic tales in the dead of the night. This all fed his fancy and his youthful fright.

Before this time, he had been sleeping directly on the floor of Cap'n's great room, especially in heavy weather. But, later on, after some advice from Mr. O'Shea, he figured out that he'd better start swinging in the hammocks with the rest of the crew, and not be known, as Mr. O'Shea had insinuated, as the 'Cap'n's pet.' So, he asked Captain for a hammock below and he began his journey, in the fo'c'sle, with the rest of the crew and the men of the ship.

The foc'sle gang came in from watch, holding the tallow lanterns. Some settled on the bench and began to carve wood figurines or etchings in mother of pearl or even scrimshaw. Others had dice to roll, while most ware hunkering down for sleep. The tallow lamps lit their faces in an orangey glow and cast deep shadows of their eyes in their skulls, and the creatures that they ware flickered on the bulkhead as they 'talked story' in the lamplight every night.

'...and that remoinds me of a time when we ware in the South Seas and...' one of them began.

Chandler took a breath and - well, here it goes - and he interrupted him:

"Meester MacGuire."

MacGuire's pumpkin of a face peered over the lantern to the boy's direction in the dark.

"That ye, Chandler?"

"Yesseer."

He laughed heartily to himself.

"What's so funny, seer?"

"I done thought I heard a woman's voice fer a second!"

"Ye've been out here too long, MacGuire!" Grimsby told him and everyone below was laughing heartily.

"Yer getting daft." Everett said.

"Deaf." Morehouse corrected him.

"Whut ever! Ye knows what Ah means!"

"I thought the same thing meself lest week, when the kid foirst starts a'comin down 'ere!"

And they all started laughing.

"Sorry, Kiddo, we've all been to Sea wey too long!" Ambrille jokes. "Our imaginations are getting to us."

"The boy ain't haid 'the change' yet."

"But, I heards him squeeking along the other day."

"Squeeking means ye'll be getting a man's voice, soon, m' boy." MacGuire told him.

"Oh! Wow!" He says, impressed with himself. He'd thought it was a cold -- so ignorant was he! If he'd had parents, surely they would have foretold him of such drastic bodily changes! So no wonder he was always trying to make these men into his family! He needed help!

"Yes-sir." Someone imitates him as a woman, croaking into a man's voice.

"We've all gone through 'the squeeks.'" MacGuire says.

"Really?" he marveled. "Ye all have?"

"Yeah, well, except Snot-nose." They laughed heartily at the high pitch of his voice.

"Yessir." Squeeked someone else.

"Quit it." snapped Snot-nose in high pitch.

"Stop protecting him." Brubaker barked from two racks over.

"Quit it. His just a kid."

"Don't ye mollycuddle him, now! He's gotta be able to handle rougher seas than these."

"Und ye'll be putting on whiskers soon, like a cat." Billy said, fingering his chin hairs. And the boy automatically felt his face again. But it was still smooth and soft - like a darned gurl's!

MacGuire said "Nare moinds them, bo-woy. Whut ye wants, Chandler."

"I heard ye talkin a few days back aboot a 'gyre.' Whut's that?"

"The gyre? Oh, well, it's a giant maelstrom in the Atlantic... not too far from here."

"Maelstrom?" This word too had made his eyes widen in terror.

"Well, it's a whirlpool."

"No it's not, MacGuire, ye're gonna scare him like it's a hurricane or sumthin, Bo-woy, listen, the gyre is just a big pool of slack water with no wind, sitting out thar in the Atlantic anticyclone, rotating a little bit clockwoise upon itself."

"Yer such a scientist."

"A sky-in-tist."

"Hah!"

"And the Gyres spin counterclockwise just across '*The Line*' in the Southern Seas, did ye know?"

"No, sir."

"And it sure puzzles us sailors."

"It sure does."

"Do ye remember Cap'n pacing the deck for four days straight, last week? Well, we waere roight in the daid middle of that thing then."

"Really?"

"Ye can get caught in that thing fer days and days! We got lecky to get er out when we did!"

"So no wonder Cap'n was so anxious!"

"I heard Cap'n McKinney advised him on how to get us out."

"Yep. He's a good man, Cap'n McKinney."

"Aye." Most agreed.

"Waren't a sneaze of a wind!"

"Aye, the doldrums."

"That's all it was?" Chandler asked. "...just the doldrums?"

"Ye sound disappointed, boy."

Doldrums did sound quite, eh, well, dull. The gyre wasn't a dull place, he was sure.

"It just sounds...um..." he didn't want to say the word 'scarry'. "I didn't know what it was, but it was...*weird*. What causes it to be so... *weird*?"

MacGuire answered him kindly: "Aye, it IS scarry, that place - *The Atlantic Gyre* - The Dead Pool."

'The Dead Pool?' Now that name did sound scarry! Seafaring was a journey under into the starry realm above, unending and terribly mysterious like the night sky, in its way of unending. Someone had said that the Sea was almost unsoundable! Was She indeed bottomless? Others had thought that there might be great undersea mountain ranges and deep breathing volcanos beneath. And then the Bible had spoken of the "Leviathon of the Deep." What was the Sea? And now, what was this 'Atlantic Anticyclone?' Was She the real world and the ground mere islands floating upon Her back?

"And the gyre? No wind goes into it; no wind goes out of it - it's The Dead Pool of the Atlantic. They say sometimes if a ship gets into the center of it, there she stays for weeks. There are legends of ships spinning slowly out thar upon themselves, year after year after year; their crew long gone mad with the thoirst and long dead...or sucked down the drain of the woorld..."

Strange confabulations entered the young kid's head and danced upon the bulkhead in the shadows of the lantern's flickering light; they taunted him with fiendish, malevolent jigs of his terribly youthful imagination.

"We got lecky to get out when we did." Someone else added.

"The Captain wuz just a'fretting."

"I remember that" the kid said. "So no wonder he was."

"Who knows how long we coulda been out thar!"

"They say that's waere the seamonsters swum..." Began one.

"Talk Story, mate!" One of them wisecracked but, then they all began to settle down in their slings and went on an imaginary journey filled with superstition, seaweed and such of the stuff of the dreams beneath.

And, pondering the real mystery of the gyre alongsides the epic story telling each night, Chandler, like a kid that he still was, despite his big hands and growing legs, began to drift off in the agony and tiredness of a growing kid. Though his mind was tired, he began to dream that...

...he had come upon a ghost ship off the Grand Fogbanks. Its sails sagged; its rigging hung damp and drooping; its deck was empty and forelorn. Upon the quarterdeck sat a lone captain, behind the helm, listless, having given up on many years ago, he sat there, in the grey mists that never left him in The Dead Pool. Ah, in the Pool of Death, in the slack, pale waters that sat upon the ocean's anticyclone, like a cyclops' eye, a'watchin', unblinking, the sins of the men upon Her waters. Out there sat the captain, his eyes long devoid of hope, haunted the kid all the night long in dreams too vague and shrouded with mystery to be fathomed...

Then a real storm came upon *The Cyclone* as he dreamt. But the boy did not awake from his deep slumber, though all hands were piped. The young kid did sleep on through the din of a most terrible storm – twenty footers and the bow ploughed right into the waves. He only awoke at dawn when he found to his horror that the foc'sle crew drenched and exhausted coming back to their hammocks - but, having beat the storm on Her own terms!

"Well, lads we at least made fifteen knots!"

"And at least Chandler got his beauty sleep!"

C.

Gold in the Hold

Lately, the boy found the Captain very restless; he'd sit in his captain's chair, spinning the silver divider on the red cushion of its arm and tapping his foot. Later he'd get up, pace the deck for a while and he'd stop to stand at the charts, studying and spinning the divider on them, and then he'd flop back down into the chair, sighing. The boy studied him in wonder, recalling the essence of his nightmares. Later Cap'n did a lot of calculations on parchment, and then he'd strut over to a special hold amidships where his long-trusted mate Mr. Mortensen, the ships Master-at-Arms, basically lived. Mortensen seemed to always have a pistol strapped across his chest, for he was watching over all the treasure, weapons, ammo and some of the provisions – in particular, the water. As the level of water dropped, the pacing of the Captain in his cabin increased. What would he do? The boy could actually follow what the Captain was thinking and he saw that the Captain had very real problems, like thirst, to navigate through; and, all that gold in the hold didn't magically solve them; if anything, it made them worse by weighing and slowing them down.

Later, in the dead still of the doldrums Cap'n heard the topsail watch holler out "Cloud a hoy! To the south-south-east! Cloud a hoy!"

"All that wondering about in the gyre!" Cap'n popped out of his rack and pounded up to deck.

"Set the tops'ls, Mr. O'Shea." He ordered the First Mate.

"Storm clouds on the horizon, Cap'n." O'Shea countered and they all could see the tiny cloud growing before their very eyes. What had been a tiny puff a few minutes ago had already spawned into a line of towering cumulus.

"We've got to pull ten knots for at least two more hours before nightfall or we'll have no water come Monday next week! Instead of knots per hour, our speed is measured in cups of water per hour!"

"Aye – Aye, Captain." Said O'Shea and gave the orders, with manipulation squinting in his eyes, his pupils like dagger points. He seemed ready to use anything against the Captain!

Cap'n came back to the main deck twenty minutes later to find the watch had logged only five knots. He looked at the droopy topsails, frowning. "Brace the main tops'les! Hell, I'll do it meself!" and he stripped his overcoat, tossing it to Rene and swiftly climbed up the rigging like a big cat, and helped Smollet, Wilcox and Powers set them. He climbed back down, jumping from the gunwhale and landing loudly on the deck.

"How fast now, Salty?" he cried, completely ignoring Mr. O'Shea. The watch dropped the knotted line over board and flipped the hourglass upside down.

"Five knots, Captain."

"Five knots still!"

"We're hitting the current again, Cap'n!" O'Shea cried.

Captain shook his head "No, it's all the gold weighing us down!"

Rene held his coat up for Cap'n to put back on and as he turned and put his arms into it there was a transformation – that the epaulets gave Cap'n an aura of authority, power and, indeed, of fame. Mr.O'Shea squinted at him as if in the deepest of envy and hatred. Cap'n went back below, the First Mate following him, then the boy.

They all stormed into the great room. "What's wrong, Cap'n?"

"We're going to run out of water in a week."

"Surely we'll hit on a target before that, Cap'n."

"Not with five knots! It'd be a laughingstock slow motion attack!"

"The current will abate, Sir."

"You want to bank on that?" He said, glancing at the chart.

"No sir."

Yes you do! So I can fail and then YOU can become Captain! But he said instead: "Don't you remember how murderous and frenzied a thirsty crew could get? I'd almost rather face the Royal Navy than a thirsty pirate crew!" He had well learned this lesson in his past – in fact, there had even been a "change of command" because of thirst, which had eventually lead to him being voted the Captain, instead of Mr. O'Shea! And he sensed the First Mate had secretly hated him all these years, ever since.

"Aye, sir." The first mate muttered leaving the greatroom.

And he had sworn to himself that he'd never let things slip up like that again! A captain didn't have time to drink and dance about upon the deck every sunset with the crew like O'Shea did. He had to plan and craft. Ah! If it hadn't been for that gyre he'd circled around in for weeks, he'd be already on his way in the Caribbean! And he could grab that treasure in a cinch and be on his merry way! For, he had a secret up his sleeve - he had been to that island, once before, while in the Royal Navy. Back then his former captain had to careen their ship on the long beach there, for she had become barnacle encrusted and they had waited for high tide to beach her there. It was long hard work and it had taken weeks. His friend and shipmate, Luc Janvier had boldly explored the island in the afternoons when it had been too hot to work. When he later heard that Captain Lawless had buried his gold there he declared to himself that he must go back and find it! Now all he had to do was head back to Savannah and find his friend and his ship, go to that beach together and grab the gold!

But, on the other hand, it was beach two miles long and five hundred feet wide - suppose he couldn't find the treasure? Or, what if Captain Lawless had hidden it deeper within the mountainous island? There were many ravines and caves, and, of course, the deadly Indians, The Caribe.

He sighed, "How can I go on?" All seemed set against him – even God. O'Shea, who was older than him by ten years, had a portion of the crew's loyalty tight in his grip. And yet the crew had always loved their captain. Let them suffer thirst, though, and who knows what would happen. He didn't want to find out.

He turned and saw the kid and Captain McKinney sitting there in his compartment, so completely innocent of piracy and all its misdeeds; it seemed a terrible heaping of injustice to let them suffer two hundred more miles of open ocean

with the madness of thirst upon them, when neither had done a thing to bring this ill fortune upon themselves.

Suddenly it wasn't about thirst anymore, but a deeper thing - called guts! For, there was but one thing to do now and he wasn't sure he could pull it off! Suddenly he breathed out to himself:

"Well, I'll do it!" and he pounded back up on deck.

"Set course, due south."

"For?" asked O'Shea.

"McGaha Island."

"Sir?" O'Shea's jaw dropped in shock. And then cunningly he gave him a sideways, disapproving look.

Cap'n could just haul off and kick him!

"You heard me!" He turned to face him squarely; his cutlass in his belt. He was armed and ready.

"And the Royal Navy?"

"D'accord, Mr. O'Shea, then throw all the gold overboard!!"

"No, sir." He replied, patronizing him.

"Mr. O'Shea, we're simply going to *buy* provisions from Elizabethton."

"What!"

"That's right!" he said "They still love the colour of gold, Marcus." He said now with that leading smile, that threw off cocksure First Mates and renegade mutinous gangs in the crew. He had an intoxicating array of charisma as dazzling as the sun.

"*Touché!*" he cried to the mate, aware that he had trounced him well.

"Hmph!" he countered.

"We'll go in as Frenchmen..." Cap'n said, narrowing his eyes, as in a kind of daydream: "I'll do all the talking. René and Nico will play the first and second mates when we go into moor." He was chuckling a bit now. "They'll have a few days to practice, and..."

"What about the rest of us? We don't speak French."

"Everybody else - including yourself - will keep their mouths shut!"

O'Shea took a step back at the sharpness in Cap'n's tone. But slyly, or wily as he was, he countered back softly: "Can we really pull this off, Captain? Can we really take on the Royal Navy in port?"

"We have no choice Marcus at two bells gather the crew on the quarterdeck and I'll brief them on this meself. I have spoken."

O'Shea stormed off, not bothering to secure the hatch behind him and the Captain latched it himself, shaking his head and throwing up his hands, he swore "I'm gonna keelhaul his can!"

But then he tilted his head in a reappraisal of the situation and shook it off with a smile, looking right at Captain McKinney and the boy, he shrugged his shoulders and sat back down with pen in mouth and paper before him, smirking as he began to jot down all kinds of ideas and checking and then rechecking the charts.

An hour later he briefed the crew on the quarterdeck. There was a flurry of activity afterwards and by the next day the expert sail makers, Machen and Lynchpin had fashioned the Fleur de Lis and had hoisted it upon the Mizzenmast. The carpenter, Chips, had made a sign for the transome, mysteriously of some port girl from Cap'n's past: "*Marie de Marseilles.*" McDade carefully penned fake bills of lading for the logbook showing a contrived new destination of St. Augustine, Florida. Cap'n ordered Mr.O'Shea and Cindahr to exchange outer coats, sashes and hats with Rene and Nico.

The cook, in particular, enjoyed the cook's temporary promotion to First Mate. He donned all his new gear came on deck strutting about on the quarterdeck mimicking Mr.O'Shea's gate. The entire crew on deck and aloft burst out in laughter and applause. The real first mate grimaced and slunk to his cabin with a bottle of rum boldly in his hand.

Cap'n approved of this new crewman, saying, "Too bad you're not interested in being a mate, Rene. I could use your loyalty."

"I like the galley, Cap'n." he said patting his round tummy.

Cap'n laughed heartily - the cook could make anyone laugh. It was one of his gifts to the ship. Rene had many special little qualities about him that actually weren't little at all. Sometimes he was like the mother of the ship, patching feuds, tending to wounds and making them all laugh. He united the ship. He was full of joy of life and Cap'n valued the cook's loyalty much.

As they practiced their sail handling commands in French all afternoon the crew answered Rene back: "Oui, "Captain Cook!" with delight.

McGaha Island

"Land -- Ho!" cried the watch aboard the main mast.
 "Land -- Ho!" and all hands jumped out of their slings.
 "Land -- Ho!" and all hands pounded up onto main deck.

Chandler ran to the main deck to look. At first it was a far off lavender speck; but as the ship sailed closer the tiny hills grew into an island mountain range before his very eyes. At noon, it had become a shrouded, jungly and forebooding island, especially since it was a place of impossible, brooding danger, for it was their enemies' Sea Fortress. Its high mountain battlements caught patches of light breeching through the cloud deck. A salty mist surrounded the entire island due to crashing waves, which continually pounded the shorelines far beneath. And it was this very sea fortress that Captain La Fourche boldly took on!

Adding to the mysterious quality of the island, though the Brittish may have inhabited the areas adjacent to the natural harbors, the inland was filled with dense jungles where the mysterious native peoples lived. In past voyages with Captain McKinney, they had come upon the peoples of these isles which Europeans had mistakenly called Indians since Columbus' time two hundred years ago.

When he was younger Chandler's mother had read him books full of drawings, of mysterious, head-shrinking, cannibals of the most savage, untamed sort imaginable. Every time they came upon an uncharted island he vividly conjured up these savages, from her stories. What would happen to them when they ventured there? But, today they were now in the very bold and capable hands of Captain La Fourche!

Throughout the night they sailed the rest of the way to the entrance of the harbor. The boy slept in fits, awakening throughout the night wandering when they would attack.

"About two hours off." Captain said at dawn. "Post a stern and main mast watch for all ships; as this is a big port."

"Aye, aye, Captain."

"Okay." And he sat in his big chair on the quarterdeck, just thinking and thinking, fiddling with his compass as he did so, and tapping his boots most impatiently. The boy brought him tea and he drank it there, watching everything, irritably over the brim of the teacup.

A few hours later he ordered the Mortensen to arm everyone and stow loaded pistols and rifles in nooks all over the deck. The crew tucked smaller shots under their belts. He ordered Gunner Mead to have his crew load all the main guns below. Others readied the hooks and winches tied under the gunwhale for easy reach.

"Ship to starboard!" cried the watch at two bells. The seafog soon lifted and a large vessel appeared and sailed slightly ahead of them several miles away, and Cap'n

strutted to the bow and studied her intently for an hour with the glass. He ordered to reef all the topsails and fall in way behind her.

"What was she flying?" he hollered up to the watch.

"The Crown Jack, Cap'n!" The watch screamed back down. "The Royal Navy!"

"Glass of my best port to ye who first learns her name!"

"Aye-Aye! Cap'n!"

"What's her course?" he cried.

"South-South-West, Captain."

"She's sailing at a broad reach sir."

"Good," he told his Fake First Mate "We'll follow her to harbor."

A while later O'Keefe called out: "Ahoy, Captain! "She be *The Vantage*, Cap'n, *The HMS Vantage!*"

He looked in the glass and a few minutes later, he too, saw the name and clearly remembered a very stern man rumored to be upon her. He took another look at her and now he could count, one, two, three rows of guns on both sides! She might have thirty, altogether! As they got closer, he could see them better; they were the new long-shooters!

And the watch, O'Keefe, slid down, interrupting his thoughts: "Und now Oi wants me glass-o-port, Cap'n!"

"You can't wait till this is all over, O'Keefe?" he says, still intently watching the *The Vantage* while gauging her firepower.

"Oi cain'ts, Cap'bn."

He rolled his eyes and turns to Chandler, saying "We might have a big fight ahead of us and all this guy wants to do is to drink!"

"Seer..."

"Get him it, Chandler. Now, get out of my face!"

Captain disappeared below decks for sometime and came back much changed. He had put a large amount of powder on his black locks and René had braided them tightly back in a tail that went below his collar, hiding his long, black hair. He had trimmed his moustache and goatee, powdering them as well. He had put on a long, flowing French blouse and light-grey vest, silk hankee, and white leggings with genteel shoes, more like slippers on his feet. He looked more like a French Duke than a wily half-English pirate and the crew cheered when he came back on deck.

"Hallo, Sire!"

"Hallo Captain Masterson!" O'Shea jibed.

Captain frowned but then said: "Okay, René, the stage is all yours now."

"Oui, oui, Monsieur Capitain!" he cried out.

"Set the heading 180." Captain said lowly in English to Nico at the helm.

"_____ in French. "Marchez!"

Everyone was laughing uncomfortably at the unfamiliar commands that they had practiced.

"Belay that laughing, crew!" Cap'n swore almost at a whisper. "We're coming up on their ears now! Don't blow our cover!"

As they came into the harbor, a bumboat sailed out to meet them, eager to beat other merchants to the sale of provisions - a good sign, Cap'n thought.

"Ahoy! Capitain!" the agent hailed him from the boat at fifty yards and the boat's coxswain deftly aligned the ketch to sail alongsides. "Bonjour, Monsieur." He said, coming to the gunwhale, removing his hat in a flourish.

"Bonjour." Cap'n replied.

"Sir, I hope you speak English sir."

"Yes, I do."

"Great! Sir, I'm Robert West, of Chisholm, Brighton and Dunn - merchants, at your service, Sir!!" and he smiled broadly as if meetin' someone very famous. Perhaps West had already figured out who he was?

"*Ro-bear*, we're mostly here for food and water." Cap'n said in the most halting English that he could muster.

"Aye, Capitain, we can certainly help you there, as we have the best rates in town on flour and..."

"Alrright, alrright. Ne verr mind yer best rrates, we just want it fast – in and out in three hours. Can ye do that, *Ro-bear*?"

"Yessir!"

"We want to beat out of here, by six bells - storms a'brewin'." He lied.

The clerk glanced involuntarily at the cloud decks and called back "Aye, Monsieur Capitain! Six Bells – you got it!"

"Also, we shall desire a berth that'll be downwind in three hours."

"I know just the spot for you sir." He pointed to the third pier out.

"How does that one look, Captain?" He asked, with his eyes very eager wide open. He looked as if he had recognized the Captain.

"It looks perfect." He said, nodding and with a look of satisfaction, for it would work great for the afternoon breezes. And it was one pier away from where *The Vantage* would be mooring.

West raised his hat in salute and he ducked as the coxswain jibed the boom of their bumboat around and he swung back towards the port.

Rene stood beside him, "Everything okay, Cap'n."

Cap'n answered "Well, he's flying the jibe and mains'le 'wing-wing' likes he's in a hurry to get back -- Why? Is he bustling, or is he anxious to alert the numerous Royal Navy ships there?"

Captain glanced to René who said, "He seemed like a good kid, Cap'n. I don't think so."

"You always see the best in folks, Rene."

"I know, Sir. It's my way. But, I'm not Cap'n am I?"

Cap'n sighed. "It's wearisome Rene, wearisome."

"We trust ye, sir."

And Cap'n ordered tacked sails to run with the wind to the point, as did the *Vantage* ahead of them, jibing back to a downwind position in the seabreazes that rushed inland with them.

They began to enter the mouth of the bay. He studied the sailors on the mast of *The Vantage*. They were already aloft on the yards, ready to reef up the remaining sails in the small harbor ahead. He would soon reef his so that they wouldn't crash into them.

They passed the narrow entrance to the harbor. Rocks jutted out of it. Some boulders and smaller stones had holes that little seashelled creatures had bored, which made the rocks look like hundreds of skulls piled there. He shuddered. He hoped that they could by pass these very soon on their way back out.

All the way into the harbor, Captain had studied the terrain with his glass, lining up the pier's end with a deep valley, where tight, afternoon land winds would possibly funnel through every day. By the berth was a little span of water, where he could spin his ship around easily in a heavy land breeze. The Sea and land breazes were some of the most predictable winds in the world, for they occurred on every shoreline in the world in the afternoon and evening. He studied the palm trees all along the shoreline of the cove and, as he thought, they all leaned seaward, meaning a stiff land breeze funnelled out of here every afternoon from that valley as the sun's power waned and the winds rushed back out to Sea!

Since the bow was going to be pointed directly upwind – towards the valley, until they could fall back off the wind some, they would still have to be spun around in the harbor with the help of strong rowmen. He called into the greatroom of his bravest and toughest men and gave them his most difficult orders and with promises of greater treasure portions for their courage. He hand-picked Skilly, Gibbons and Dariush, the Persian, and the crack Comstock as the coxswain, issuing him a longshooter as well as others. He picked several of the gunner's sharpest shooters, Cornwall, Winters and McCoomb to cover them. They were all the strongest and most loyal crewmen that he could muster. When he briefed them, their eyes lit up with the glimmer of gold and the excitement and glory of the danger to come.

He would have the rowers sit in the rowboats on the far side of the ship, in the shade, ostentatiously to work on the rigging and tiny painting jobs throughout the day as they waited there. He'd have someone constantly supply them with water and tasty pastries purchased from pier merchants as they sat there and worked there in the heat, on-the-ready, to row the ship off at an instant. He knew them - just the sugary treats would be enough motivation for the rowers to do their duty delightfully.

The mooring lines would probably have to be chopped for a swift escape. He ordered earlier the Boatswain to "sharpen four of the axes as if to shave a man's face!"

"Aye, Cap'n!"

He watched the agent, West, preparing the loading party. "It's almost as if he knows we want privacy." He muttered to Rene

"Aye, Captain." He whispered back. "It'll be easy to get her back and about way over here."

He ordered the rest of the sails reefed. They now glided to the third pier. He ordered the special group of rowers over board to pull them next to the pier.

Brawny longshoremen stood on the pier with the big mooring lines in their hands. Robert waved, directing them to a far spot on the third pier near the end. A few carts came down the pier already loaded with barrels of provisions and casks of water. Cap'n was rather impressed with the West's skill as a merchant to pull this all off. It was just what he wanted to see. He would have to remember this agent if he ever found his way back here again.

The young man began to assist the line handlers on the pier and with René's French commands, they cinched *The Cyclone* on in and Robert already began ordering the wenches on the spars over head to pick up the barrels and boxes.

"Thought you might like this spot, Monsieur Capitain." West said, coming aboard on a makeshift plank.

"Verry good job, *Ro-bear!*" Cap'n said shaking the young man's hand heartily.

"We aim to please!" he replied.

Cap'n gave him a flourish of his hat and he joined Cap'n for tea on the deck as he secretly began to watch *The HMS Vantage* moored on the adjacent pier.

And they began to take on cargo in the hold. The chosen rowmen began to lower their boats over the side 'to work' alongsides the ship.

"We have an excellent galley in town for your crew sir, if I can recommend..."

"Thank you, *Ro-bear.* They're having a bout with the seacrud today, and they'll be resting below decks."

"Aye, Captain. And how should I calculate the bill of sale, sir, in Francs, or in Pounds...?"

"In gold." He said almost whispering, gritting his teeth, and getting tense.

"Oh, aye-aye, Sir! I'll be right back, then." West put his teacup down and went eagerly to the end of the pier to an office on the quay wall. Captain furtively studied him with the glass from behind the main mast.

He was waiting for the customs officials now and he ordered McDade to ready the fake log books and papers for their approach.

O'Shea sat there with him in the shade, mumbling through the corners of his mouth the whole time, whining about being shot at and so on. And, Captain realized he was quite drunk.

He was just surrounded by enemies! And, no, not mere enemies, but mortal foes! They all sought his head! He peeked furtively over at *The Vantage*, adjacent looking to see if any unusual activities were taking place, or, if the captain aboard was watching them, or if an armed party had climbed upon the spars.

How had things come to this? Once he'd been a sailor, peacefully doing his duties at Sea under that very same captain over there. Those innocent days were long gone and now he had to guard every aspect of his life with the vigilance of a pirate captain. Water, food, gear - it all had to be faught for!

As he sat there, it struck him that one of his most trusted men, Mortensen, must have turned to give O'Shea that drink. The pressure piled on. That was deliberate treason. He discreetly pulled René off of his performance as First Mate. It was nice to have someone he could confide in. And they spoke in French, he basically said:

"Thor wouldn't turn, Daniel. I just think the other officers have their own private stash."

"The Officers! And they don't tell me about it!"

"Well, I think that they've had it for some time and they think you know about it already..."

He was beginning to get a bad feeling about his entire crew. The pressure he felt then, while sitting in the hot sun! He realized right then that they were being subtly turned by his First Mate! What a terrible position that put him, now, to have to sack his First Mate!

There's got to be another way.

Or, perhaps he just needed a friend or an ally in all this, and his mind went to work, as he paced the deck. He did have other options. He always had many friends all around the ocean ports of the world! It would also be the perfect time to go search out his blood mate, Luc Janvier, for the trade winds would be blowing just right! Hopefully some fluke of nature wouldn't be playing tricks with the winds this year, for Luc had said that he would wait for him in Savannah Town just after Easter!

One hour after he'd secured from sailing, the Brittish officials came along the pier aboard to check their maritime documentation. All hands had gone below before they had come aboard except for the actual hands loading cargo - which, Nico, because of his strong French accent, assisted the longshoremen on deck. One of his most trusted mates, Mick McDade, had been a legal assistant for a maritime law firm in Bristol before being impressed to Sea by the Navy. He was an expert at legal documentation and records and he had replicated them in splendid detail. He had a billet as an idler on board and never had to handle sails, except in storms, when 'All Hands' were hailed. McDade had also been keeping, their entire voyages at Sea, on a separate, legal log, without any reference to illegal raids, of course, and now that very log would come in handy. In fact, one could almost say that it had saved their. He would be sending McDade a bottle of his best stock down below when this was over!

The officers nosed around fairly well, and asked him and René many personal questions: why were they here and what was their destination, where were they born and so on. Captain had told McDade to delay them as much as possible, for, with them aboard, there would be no attack from land. However with them aboard there was more chance for their charade to be discovered.

The officials left at noon and they all seemed well, but he stood there in the hot sun all morning watchful as can be.

The Pink Lady

Two hours went by in the sun, with Cap'n watching everything going on in town. He had the boatswain bring the four axes to him; testing each one by dry-shaving the coarse hair on his forearms. The blades shaved the hair right off and he smiled to the boatswain whispering: "Now give each one to 'the axe gang.'" The Boatswain handed them out discreetly to the men. He gave a few of them conspiring glances, discreetly assigning each one a mooring line to chop. All they had to do was stand-by the mooring lines. Cap'n bought a full barrel of fresh limes from Florida from a pier hawker and he personally gave several of them to everyone who was baking in the sun as the longshoremen loaded the ship.

He was leaning over the taffrail and quietly encouraging his rowers, who were getting hot and he was wiping his brow in the sun, when the powder-puff smell of sweet talcum came up on the pier and he heard: "Daniel."

The rowing crew all swore.

And behind the cloud of talc smell stood a dazzling lady dressed in pink satin.

"Ahoy! Captain!" she hailed and twirled her umbrella.

O'Shea tottered over and cried out in great surprise. "Lassie!"

"Bonjour!" Cap'n cried, popping up and then bowing to her with a great flourish. He looked up - and he knew her!

"Daniel, is it really you?"

He stood up and looked around in terror – the longshoremen had stopped working and stood staring. Who was she, again? Oh yes, he had some memories... The Whore of North Island! Or, was she a port girl from Savannah? Bristol? Nassau? Marseilles?

"Hello, Marcus!" she hailed over to O'Shea. As she did this Cap'n noticed how overpoweringly beautiful that she was... When she smiled her teeth gleamed like polished ivory. Her smile showed him that she knew that she was very beautiful that she wielded a kind of power in it that might be deadly as a four pounder!

The First Mate answered with a drunken flourish in a most Bristol accent "Hello, Rosie, Rosie Shaughnessy of New Oil-leans!"

Tension was thick in the air. The longshoremen were still staring. West snapped his fingers, though and they quickly went back to work.

"You're supposed to be French, go below and drink!" Cap'n snapped in a hoarse whisper.

What a sharp look the First Mate gave back to him, but then he staggered to the hatch and went below.

Cap'n came straight away across the makeshift brow, grabbed her wrist and pulled her along the pier adjacent to the stern of the ship, far away from the longshoremen. At the stern, he turned her so he could watch them. He was really perplexed because she easily recognized him despite all his disguises!

"It really IS you!" she cried pointing to his whitened hair.

"Okay, okay." He stiffened, pushed her back and was watching the longshoremen.

"I thought I'd never see you again!" she fluttered her blue eyes at him.

"Yes."

"What brings you to my little island?" she said, lashes still fluttering like a butterfly.

"Provisions, Rosie." He shook a little, but all the longshoremen were still working.

"How did you know I was here?"

"I have a great view from my house." And she pointed with the tip of her silk umbrella to an impressive white house on the hillside "with a spyglass, for watching ships going to and fro."

"To watch for potential customers?"

She pretended to be modest with a slight bow, "Well, yes, for my husband; he's Harold Chisholm."

"Oh! Well, I see you've come up in life," He said kissing her hand and he stood back up, looking slightly past her, counting: 'All the flour was now aboard, five, six, seven, eight barrels...' As he stood there another winch of cargo landed on the deck. 'Now we have most of the water casks and burlap sacks of food. We could leave now if we wanted to,' he thought.

"Not the kind of customers you're thinking of, Daniel." She said. "We supply all the Royal Navy in mercantile and ship's goods."

"Good for you, Rosie."

"I've come up in life." She fluttered, proudly.

"Yes you have."

"And what about you, Daniel? What I remember about you Daniel, you're not some French duke - but" and she whispered "an infamous half-English pirate!"

He kissed her hand again. What else to do! She had him cold!

"I was watching you, from above, and I said to myself, why, that's none other than my old lover, Captain Daniel La Fourche."

She had recognized him from this great distance. He knew then that he was in mortal danger!

"What do you want from me, Mrs. Chisholm?" he could feel his voice beginning to start that awful shaking that always preceded a seabattle.

"You are going to pay us, Daniel?"

"Of course I am! I'm honest!"

"An honest pirate?" she giggled.

"In Gold, Rosie, and top price too!"

"I'm impressed!" She said, charmed and fluttering eyelashes like a darned butterfly, just flapping away. Irritation stung him and he winced.

"Why not just blow them all away, Daniel?" she said, gesturing to the Navy all around them.

"Because of the agent Robert West, treated us fair and square, that's why."

"Since when did you become decent, Daniel? You're not the man I remember."
 "It's always good business to be good. This is just business to me." He snapped.
 "Funny, I thought it was much more than that."

He shrugged.

"They all won't think you're soft if you've gone polite?" she inquired while twirling her umbrella, pointing to the crew.

"Nope!" he answered - the fire of the sun sparkled in his eyes. He didn't have to explain with those eyes.

"I guess not." She smiled.

"Do you mind not telling anyone who we really are? We just want provisions and we'll pay you very well and then we'll fly the hell out of here!"

"Well that depends, Daniel."

Now the true whore was coming back to her! He remembered more of her now. Though she was still quite young and beautiful, she had been a real cunning player in a deal in New Orleans! She had done a business deal with someone that had gone very wrong... She was bad.

"How much do you want Mrs. Chisholm?"

"Five hundred pieces of gold."

He swallowed, adding it to the cost of the provisions that was nearly all the reserve treasure in gold! And then O'Shea and the crew would murder him as well!!

"Well, well! You're still such a whore." He mumbled. She was the very girl he remembered with treachery!

"I was just joking Daniel!"

"No you weren't!"

"Oh, where's your sense of humor, Daniel?"

"So, how much *do* you want?"

"Poor joke, Daniel. What I really want is my former lover back." She smiled again, twirling. "I have no need for money whatsoever." She bragged and smiled.

"Well, you have me cold." He said turning away from her, studying the seawalls and the back alleys for subtle movements.

"Daniel, pardon me, for being so bold; I just need a man."

"You have one!"

The last barrel of flour was loaded!

He scoffed. "You're married, gurl."

"But, look at my husband!" And she nosed to a tub of a man, a heavyset, older man, who was standing down the pier. Robert had earlier introduced him as Harold Chisholm. And now the fat man was staring hard at him as he talked to his wife! Just what he needed!!

"Just look at him!" she scoffed.

"But that's the price of your nice house."

She grabbed his arm – "Come over to my house, Daniel. My husband is busy on the pier."

"I cannot do that!" he yanked his arm away.

"Why not?"

He stared hard at her.

"But you're a pirate, Daniel!"

"Not by choice!"

"Oh come on now, you've set the New World on fire!"

"Rosie..."

"Daniel, alroight then just let me come aboard and I can be your lady, that's all I've ever desired! I want to leave with you! Today!"

Amongst all the women he'd ever known he could scarcely remember her, and now she wanted to leave her fabulous house - just to be his lady! All was not right here! She must be lying! And -- why would she be lying!

"He found out about my past." She admitted finally, her shoulders fell. "He's been just dreadful." She swallowed. Like the rest, she was fleeing things as well.

"Everyone hates me out here." She swallowed again. "Everyone..."

"So things are not so perfect here."

"No, Daniel..."

He felt the afternoon winds, upon his face, begin their steady puffs from the valley and he was ready now. Then suddenly he saw a group of men with long shooters on tops the high masts of the *HMS Vantage*! She'd been sent to distract him! And, despite his foreboding, the ploy had worked damn good! "You're a decoy!" he screamed at her.

She looked and saw them, and gasped, her eyes opened wide. "Oh, No, Daniel, I swear not!"

"Get away from me!" he strode past her towards the brow.

"Daniel, take me with you!"

"No way!" he cried. "You betrayed me!"

"I did not!! I only wanted you again!"

"Liar!" and he strode away leaving her crying by the brow. Her husband came charging down the pier like a big angry bull!

He crossed the brow. O'Shea had come back on deck and was staring drunkenly at Rosie. He whispered hoarsely to him: "They're coming in force along the pier! Get ready for a fight! She recognized me! Pass the word!!" He walked along the deck whispering. "Everyone quietly arm up, and get ready to shove off. Get the rowers ready on-the-double!! Get the deck crew ready to cast off. On the drop of me hat - we fight!"

The sharp clerk, Robert, stood at the brow talking to her, trying to sooth her and Captain called out to him:

"Alroight, alroight, enough provisions, Mr. West, what's me tab?"

"But we haven't loaded the lumber on yet." He said, turning to face the ship.

"The lumber!!"

"Your ships carpenter ordered some lumber."

"Damn the lumber!" he cried. "And damn the ship's carpenter! Just give me the tab!"

"But, sir, I haven't added it all up yet!"

"Look the tides going out, Robert West, so, just pick a nice big number then! And one for yourself for our haste!"

While this was transpiring, she continually plead to him: "Daniel, let me come aboard!" And West looked at her, bewildered.

And then West came aboard and just glanced at his tallying books and guessed a number in great haste. "A hundred Pieces?"

"I am really trying to pay you, Robert!!!"

"Sorry, sir if it's too much, sire! But, I hurried for you!" He says. By the look in his eyes one could tell that he knew who the Captain really was!

"Mortensen, pay the man!"

"Aye Captain!" and the Mortensen pulls up a very heavy burlap sack of gold. "This is a hundred pieces of gold." And he gave it to the clerk.

And the clerk eye's are buldging under the heavy sack, but he smiled "Is that really you, Captain La Fourche?"

And Cap'n stuck his musket to West's throat and cocked the hammer. "What do ye want!"

"They're mustering around the seawall sir!!" He whispered and gestured with the tilt of his head.

Captain could see them forming an attack; he pulled off the musket.

"And, there's sharpshooters on the top of *The Vantage*, I can see them for myself!"

"Damn her!"

"She didn't betray you, sir, I swear it!" he said his arms laden with gold. "It was the husband! The husband recognized you!"

"Cast off!" he cried.

"She told me to tell you that she still loves you!"

"Whatever!" Captain looked up. "Gunner Mead, get some guys ready for those sharp shooters."

"Aye sir!"

"Thank you, Robert! You've been excellent assistance!" He walked the clerk with his hand on his shoulder and politely pushing him towards the brow.

"Aye, Sir! I always wanted to meet you, Captain!" he explains "Take me with you, Sir!"

Another one? "Sorry, mate!"

And Mortensen piled another small sack of gold upon his chest.

"That's for yer trouble." Mortenson told him

"Thank you sire!" and he lumbered off the plank with it.

"Hurry off, Robert! Hurry!!"

"Aye, sir!"

"We're gone!"

"Fair winds to you, Captain!" he cried from the pier and Cap'n pulled off his hat in a flourish. And we could hear the clerk marvelling: "Today, I say, I met The Great Pirate Captain - Captain Danial La Fourche, and he paid me, himself, a hundred pieces of gold!!"

It was rumored that West was later able to open up his own place become his own merchant, and oft told tales of Captain La Fourche.

Pier Attack

She still stood at the brow hailing him “Daniel, please, let me come aboard!” He steadfastly ignored her, and neither relazed just how effectively she was blocking the entire oncoming attack, just standing there, and they shoved off easily now.

“Marcus!” she hailed him. “Tell Daniel to let me come aboard!”

“One traitor to another!” Cap’n exclaimed.

“Whut!” Marcus slurred.

“Daniel, please, I didn’t betray you, Daniel...”

O’Shea went to place the plank to help her come aboard.

“What are you doing!” Cap’n screamed. “Let the whore go, Marcus!”

“Whut!” he screamed.

“No wemen aboard! It’s in the rules!”

He was so drunk that he put out he’s hand anyways and Rosie reached for it while sobbing.

“D’accord?” he asked his French ‘First Mate,’ René.”

“Oui, Captain!”

He held his hat up and threw it down on the deck and the pirates taking cover all along the scuppers shot up at the sharpshooters on *The Vantage*.

The longshoremen turn and ran away down the pier and Rosie fell flat on the deck and Marcus flew backwards onto the deck of the ship.

‘Ock-ock-ock-ock!’ a whole regiment of Marines fired!

The husband had reached one ship away was screaming at her. “Rosie! Rosie!”

‘Booooooooooooooom! Booooooooooooooom!’ The Canons on the seawall fired! ‘Booooooooooooooom! Booooooooooooooom!’

And then sung the incoming whistle-sounds of cannonballs!

“Chop the damn lines!” Captain cried and the axe crew heaved the axes across the gunwhales. The lines popped off in an instant.

‘Boooooooooooooom! Booooooooooooooom!’

“Rowers! Bring her about!”

‘Ock-ock-ock-ock!’

And the deck was a’flurry with pirates, flying up the masts. A gang covered the rowers who pulled heavily on the ship, amongst heavy shot fire. Blood flowed down their sweaty backs as some shot began to reach them and hit them and, yet, they kept heavily rowing! And the coxswain screamed:

“Row or Hang - HO!

Row or Hang - HO!”

Row or Hang - HO!”

Others pushed long spars to shove the bow off the pier, while a flurry of men flew up the rigging under heavy fire!

O'Shea soon joined in the fight and grabbed a long-shooter from the armory and shot at the high mast of the ships all around, for all were at war with them now!

Once *The Cyclone* began to turn-to and grab the strong valley winds, the rowing crew jumped right out of their boats and swam madly for the ship, where Cap'n had earlier had someone hang heavy fishing nets and there they scrambled quickly aboard while their shipmates chopped the lines to the rowboats.

'Booooooooooooooom! Booooooooooooooom!' fired the cannons from the seawalls, again and they zoomed overhead until the gunners could find their range and azimuths!

The Cyclone flew along sides the pier now and Cap'n looked over to see *The Pink Lady* still pleading, hunched over on the pier, still effectively blocking all the canon shot!

"Daniel!" she hailed. "Marcus! Please!!!"

'Booooooooooooooom! Booooooooooooooom!' roared the canons all around her now and she jumped right off the pier, her pink skirt fluttered like a sail for a half-second and she plunged into the water.

And when they sailed right by her he screamed "Thought you could outsmart Captain La Fourche!"

"Daniel, save me!" She cried "I can't swim!"

He pointed to a cut mooring line floating behind her and she paddled over and grabbed it, crying: "Come back to me, my love!"

"So long!" he cried. And the fat husband threw her a line and began to fish her from the water, his errant little school-girl—whore!

"By the way, we did hear via proxy ship's gossip that the husband actually took Rosie back and forgave all she did and they actually lived a long happy life together after that. I can only hope it this ending to this story was true." Said Shaw.

The Marines from *The Vantage* ran right down the pier now and sharpshooters in the masts above on the other ships around them opened fire and it was raining down fire now. Several hands are on the deck lay bleeding and McDade had fallen backwards into the open hold, hitting several burlap sacks of flour and he came back up looking like a ghost. Later they would laugh, hopefully - but not now!

In the tight harbor they furled sails and beginning to jibe the mizzen boom about in a tack.

A ship came at them.

"Fire, Starboard side!" cried Cap'n a mighty thunder went off and the entire pier shuddered!

"Fire, Portside!!" And BOOOOOOM!!! Everything shook, and the gaff-rigged aft mast of the Dutch ship 'Gezemunde' fell.

"Rearm, Starboardside first!"

And they shot themselves out of the moorings and harbor! As their bow slid by the stern of *The Vantage* they shot heavy rifle fire into her transom.

As they left, a schooner named '*Maricopa*' flew upon them on the port side, and he ordered a salvo, and put a huge hole in her mainsail. They immediately dropped anchor.

"Cowards!" Cap'n cried.

Out of rifle range now, everyone in ship's company scurried up the masts and tread out on the spars boldly furling the topsails and the rest of the big, main sails and *The Cyclone* began to zip downwind along steadily out the harbor in the heavy, afternoon breezes!

Another ship, hailing out of Bremen '*Das Kleines Mädchen*' flew upwind at them and Captain ordered a warning shot at her across her bow and thus '*The Little Girl*' jibed and turned-about and left them in peace.

Everyone was cheering when they hit the open ocean winds – except Captain La Fourche, who screamed at them: "Pipe down now, all ye!!!! NOW WE ARE LOW IN AMMO!!!"

The Attack on the Firebough

The Firebough sailed abeam to the mouth of the harbor, waiting, and soon braced sails and took up a close chase - from nine points to the starboard bow and because they had the wind to their beam they were gaining upon the pirates!

Cap'n ordered all sails braced taught, while furiously pacing the deck. Every hand was on a bracing halyard, including Rene the cook and Cindahr the Third Mate and Faireburne, The Second Mate. Cap'n suddenly stopped pacing; the large crew holding the lines followed his gaze - he had found a line of towering cumulus to the West. He snapped out his telescope and studied the clouds intensely though the ship was tossing about. Suddenly the winds sheared in their favor. "Ahah! He cried and then climbed swiftly up the foremast and pulled out the spyglass and screamed: "Ahoy, crew! Downwind shear!!" Now, underneath a towering cloud waves were broiling in a suddenly strong and furious downwind gust off of a thunderhead!" He suddenly remembered a past maneuver, like this, for he was used to being the chaser and not the chased and he got a great idea, commanding from above "Turn her about!"

No one moved at the most unexpected order - back to the bay!

He jumped down the ratlines roaring like a lion! He ran to the helm.

"What!" cried Cindahr, blocking the helm himself.

"Move aside!" he grabbed Cindahr's arm and whipped him down on the deck.

"Captain!" he screamed from the deck.

"All Hands!" Cap'n screamed, "Hang the hell on! Wild-jibe to Starboard!"

The Boatswain, Izzy, piped his command loudly.

"Ready to shoot Starboard Battery, Gunner Read!!"

"AYE-AYE, Sir!"

The Boatswain's pipe screamed that order too.

"Aye, Captain!" Read screamed from the gundeck below. "Starb'd side on the ready! Aye!"

And then Cap'n spun the helm himself in a dangerous bank, jibing the mizzen's boom, everyone ducked, and hands in the rigging clung on for their very lives. Cindahr jumped up from his straddled position on the deck and helped Cap'n swing the heavy wheel around and the boom swung wildly around, and began to backfill with a heavy flap and the big ship began to fly around, but for a second they were dead in the upwind!!

"Everyone, man the Starboard rail!" Captain cried. And as they did the ship heeled sharply starboard and the crew's weight threw her over into a heel and then she cut a steep angle and got a hold of the new oncoming heavy winds.

Then the sudden squall came and filled her fully, and they lashed the boom over with a preventer, as this brought *The Cyclone's* Starboard guns about - a most unexpected move - and then he commanded:

"Starboard battery - Open Fire!"

"Booooooooooooooom!"

"A direct hit!"

The Firebaugh's main mast cracked like lightening and then leaned over, sails and all, into it's own rigging, while their crew had flown backwards and had landed in heaps all about the deck.

Captain kept the ship at a hard starboard turn. The *Cyclone's* crew's weight shifted and heeled her over sharply. They were headed right at *The Firebaugh's* stern quarter!

"Surrender or we'll blow ye out of the water!" Mr. Faerburne cried as they flew around. Their reloaded cannons pointed at them from an angle to shoot right across the deck!

All on *The Firebough* raised their hands over their head in surrender! A most unexpected fate!

One waved a white rag at them "We SUR-RENDER CAPTAIN LA FOURCHE!"

"Cap'n has 'em them!"

Then *The Cyclone* ploughed right into her, there was a huge crack as her extra heavy duty jib-boom slammed into the aft quarter of their hull! Their gunwhale fell partly into the Sea. Everyone was shooting and reloading and a hailstorm of shot flew athwartships!

The Cyclone had gained so much speed that she pushed *The Firebaugh* around until it turned alongsides and abreast of them! Then they could brace their sails swiftly to fore and after then they could easily throw their hooks and winch her in alongsides! It was a brilliant tactic! They were already roaring with victory as they winched her on in! A quarter of the crew swarmed up *The Cyclone* to reef her.

And they had also throne their hooks into the *The Firebough's* standing rigging and prepared to swarm aboard. They shot their muskets and screemed terrifying the crew aboard her.

Cap'n himself, then boldly jumped aboard *The Firebaugh*, cutlass in one hand and a musket armed and cocked in the other, flanked in a long line by both of his sides strode many of the crew, including O'Shea, Cindahr, Nico, Mortensen, Foxcroft, Cabbage - and, shooooot - ME! We all shot over their heads to frighten them. Cap'n handed off his empty shooter to me and he pulled out another loaded musket from his belt, pointing it at them! (Yes, I ware roight at he's side, he's right hand man!)

"Freeze! Move only if you dare!" he cried.

And thirty or so crewmen on deck all froze upon seeing us all. "It's Captain La Fourche!" one had cried, raising their hands high above their heads. "It really IS him!"

He smiled boldly: "None other!" he laughed his wild laugh, once more: "Haaaaaaaaaa! Ahahahahahahaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaal" and his enteरage roared with him alongsides him.

They all cowered backwards, terrified by his wild eyes and his and glorious victorious entrance into their world! It was a stunning turnabout, most completely unexpected.

Others of our crew swarmed aboard now and many climbed aloft, reefing *Firebough's* sails to slow her tugging against *The Cyclone's* hooks and lines.

"Now, young ladies, take me to your captain!"

"This way, Captain La Fourche!" motioned a skinny, blonde young mate. "And I begs for quarter, Cap'n La Fourche! I'm Greggory Cole, sir, please, let me come aboard, sir!"

"Aye! Granted, Gregg. Report yonder to Mr. Faerburne, Second Mate."

"Aye! Aye! Cap'n La Fourche!"

Cap'n followed Cole aft, when suddenly the ship's portly Captain James Mitchell charged at Cap'n screaming: "Captain La Fourche! You bastard!"

"A bastard ye call me?!" Cap'n cried, most offended indeed! And he pulled out his fencing sword with his left arm.

"You're bastard born!"

And they crossed swords.

But then, like lightening, Cap'n La Fourche suddenly lunged forth with his fencer in his right hand and with his left arm he poked the fat captain in his belly, crying "Touchez!" Cap'n cried, still lunged forwards en attack! And with precision that did not befit his rage, he poked the blubber with the sharp tip of his blade.

"AAAAaaaahhhhhhhhh!!!!!!" Captain Mitchell cried, grabbing his belly, that gushed red all over his fine cotton blouse.

"Don't ye ever call me a bastard," Cap'n cried, "again!"

The wounded captain fell to the deck, clutching his slight wound, screaming.

"I could kill the bastard now IF I had wanted to!" Cap'n cried turning to me, but he turned and left him there bleeding.

"And René wrapped a sash or sumthun on the gash upon his beeg belly.

"By the way, folks, this self same Captain Mitchell would later recover quite well and loose all that beeg famous belly! I guess Cap'n rather popped he's balloooon! He even got qoyte famous for this 'dueling' with our Captain! I know this because he later wrote a book about this attack - we all read it back then! And as if that weren't enoof, he also had a large painting commisioned of his famous fight! Years later, when I was back in Bristol again, I went looking for it and saw it, indeed, for meself, hanging in a large pub called 'Mitchell's Galley!' But what I remembers is him bleeding and screaming like a fool after Cap'n La Fourche poked him! Touchez!"

"And Cap'n would maroon him and five of his sailors a few days later on the white sands of Isla Caliente!" The rest he had set adrift in their wounded ship.

Finally, at sunset *no one dared to follow them any more!* Their ship had been ransacked of every useful item and provision, especially its ammunition and its rowboats, which *The Cyclone's* had been lost in the first attack that day. They secured the prisoners below, and then Cap'n had them cast off and he set a new course for Savannah in the Colonial Province of Georgia.

After all this, Cap'n went below for a quiet drink to himself. It had been a most victorious day, but he said to himself "Avast - I am always so tired!" At least he had acquired all of his blasted ammo! Everything he needed out here was such a struggle - and a bloody one too! He'd shot at British, Dutch, Hanseatic or Prussian, and Portugeese ships today! And he'd wounded a ship's captain! It was such an

international force to make enemies with! It might even incite nations to send a fleet after him! And this thought made him dead tired, while everybody else was just dancing on the deck with O'Shea! Was he ever going to be free of enemies?? Was he ever going to be free at all? He seemed more a slave to the ship, than a 'Free Prince!'

"Long day?" inquired Captain McKinney, asked seeing the Captain come in and reach for a bottle of rum right off, uncork it and sitting down on his bed he took a long chug right from it and then he rubbed his eyes with the corked bottle still in his fist.

"Yessir." He looked up to the overhead – they could both here them all dancing.

"I heard so much commotion today." Captain McKinney said. And he had seen most of it out the great windows. Though he was chained up inside the Captain's great room, he had figured out what had happened that day: it was an amazing defeat of a force of many ships!

"We attacked five ships, a Fort, a regiment of Royal Marines and one wily Lady in Pink."

"Wow!"

"But we got everything we needed." He said, sighing. He was furious at himself for poking the captain of *The Firebough*. It was so unnecessary! He had lost control of himself, again! This'll never do! He should've learned, by now, to resist insults! "I don't want the entire world to come after me!"

"The Pink Lady is okay?"

"Oh, yes, her old man fished her out. She'll live to pull a few more tricks."

"She was a whore?"

"Yes! They used her as a decoy for the attack!"

"Really?"

"It almost worked! But as I was recollecting what a whore she was I looked about and saw the sharpshooters sneak up the masts as she cavorted with me on the pier!"

"Wow! The Royal Navy should have kept a hold of you!"

"I wasn't officer material." He said, sighing, bottoms up and then he just grabbed another bottle and drank right out of the top, laying in bed with the bottle thinking: 'Officers don't go about poking people. I felt like a stupid school boy!"

"But, that was a most commanding performance!"

Captain McKinney saw him shrugged it off – one of the most commanding Sea battles he'd ever even heard of - let alone witnessed, and, yet this man was shrugging it off! What tales would be told of our Captain La Fourche, even before the day was out! He was becoming legendary, even as he was sitting right before him! And all he could see before him was a tired, even humbled pirate captain! And perhaps he was tired of this all? This was Captain McKinney's chance to stop and save him!

"Ah, the winds gave us great favor today, that's all." Daniel scoffed and took another long pull at the bottle.

"But only a wise captain can read the winds right!" Captain McKinney tried.

"Yes." He agreed, rubbing his eyes, for, indeed, his skyward eyes had saved the day!

"Why did you leave the Navy, Daniel?"

"I was just a common seaman, Geoffrey – I wasn't advancing like a midshipman and it's damn hard in England to get ahead when you don't have even a father, nor a family name to help you."

"Your father died?"

"No, he never claimed me, Geoffrey! I am nothing but a bastard!" he said, with a sudden razor sharp edge of fury in his voice.

"Oh!" Captain McKinney uttered, stunned. "So no wonder!"

His fist was clinched "I am nothing but a bastard!" he suddenly got up and paced the deck like a caged cat, loosing control again! "And I guess the whole world frigging knows it, too! A whoile back, one of my captives had reported that there were sea songs now being sung about me – all the verses calling me a bastard!" And, now Captain Mitchell had reopened this terribly shameful wound! "A bastard, he had called me!"

But then Cap'n sighed with heavy irony in his voice: "But, you know something, Geoff? Out here even a *bastard* can be his own free prince!" He toasted Captain Bellamy's imfamous words, lifting the bottle high in the air, for, they were so true. "Out here," he slurred "I am my own free prince." And he drank up once more, a long hard pull on the bottle, then set the bottle down on the deck and he passed out, face forward on his rack, lost to the drink.

He was, Captain McKinney noted, watching him laying there, nodding; he certainly was. Dark, lordly, masterful and a man who could wield great power with *The Sea*; he certainly was his own free prince,

And what a mighty man was he!

Drink to the Death

By sunset of the next day the trades had swept them faraway from their many enemies and René had prepared a jolly great feast, roasting the high-jacked goat on the poop deck. He had spent the whole day basting and fire roasting the goat on deck, delightfully taunting the slathering, ravenous crew all around, as he buttered up the flanks, and had the new boy, Cole, cranked a rod rigged above the hot coals.

And most of the crew were still tending to each other's wounds - with bandages and, of course, rum. Most who lay on deck with their shot wounds exposed to the healing airs were catered to very well by all their shipmates. In particular the crew of the rowboats, who all had bunches of shot sprinkled all across in their backs! Others had strains, cuts and shell fragments to be taken out, and a couple had chipped bones. But no one from *The Cyclone* had died that day! Indeed, no one had even lost a limb!

Cap'n himself was tallying in the logbook with McDade, as he visited amoungst them, all the shares that would go directly to them, the wounded that day and shaking all their hands, personally commanding their valor! And how their faces shined back to Cap'n surely the day had been victorious and he had shared and spread the valor all around him, and they had just loved him for that!

At four bells, Mr. Faerburne had hauled Captain McKinney on deck and lashed him to the rail to witness their savage celebration. "What a celebration, sir, as ye shall soon see!"

"Your only glory is in misdeeds." Captain McKinney had chided back but Mr. Faerburne wasn't listening, for he was the mate on watch and he was busy prepping the next tack in his head, once they rounded the straight, where they would face the windward side of the island's breazes. One always was strategic with the winds, and his mind was fully on the bracing he would soon set, and not on 'minor' issues, such as his soul's salvation.

Hours later near the waning times of the sun, things were all right and the sails were finally set according to the prevailing winds and hove-to the South so the crew could finally relax and drink - alas even on deck, all recounting the yesterday's most glorious business to each other, marvelling at their improbable victory against five ships!

"Cap'n can handle a ship, I tell ye!" said Cabbage raising his cup towards the Captain, who had gone up to the on the poop-deck, taking a bearing with the sextant to the North star, Polaris. The sky was red and firery, and they all stared up to him, amazed at him, for the Captain seemed equivocal and far away, as if this sort of thing was normal to him and not the great, historical and improbably total victory that it really was.

"We slammed roight into 'er, 'twas perfect. Oy've never seen anything loike that!"

"Someone said he'd once served in the Royal Navy."

"He's been out here twenty years! Ten years as Captain!"

"He can handle a ship - loike a beautiful dame!"

"And, speaking of beauties, did ye see the goirl, Rosie!"
 A crewmen whistled, gesturing with his hands an hour glass.
 "Oh, what a lass!"
 "Oh, what a goirl!"
 "And, whoy wuz it we din tek 'er aboard?"
 "Cuz Cap'n mistrusted her greatly."
 "Well, Oy heard aboot 'er, lads, listen up! That vury lady, tharr, she ware none other than 'The Great Whore of North Island' you saw, at work, as a decoy!"

"Goodness, Oy've heard many a tale abooot that wemon and that she was as treacherous as they comes."

"She's come from a'far off - from New Oileens! They must've driver 'er way outta there!"

"Aye, mates, Oy heard that one, too."
 "Well, shey's the one who tricked Ojos Jones out of his loot."
 "Really? *That* was her?"
 "Yessir."
 "Great treachery!"
 "Of the hoighest skills, mates!"
 "Good thing Cap'n avoided her - loike the playgue."
 "Boot - She din look so bad." Muttered another.
 "Hey jes cuz she din look bad, don't mean she waern't bad!"
 "Trust me, Garnett, she waere as bad as they comes."
 "Cap'n always makes the roight moves."
 "Eee does."

And most of the crew there were looking admiringly towards their Captain as they talked of him and the growing legend right before them.

Cap'n had come down the ladder and as he paued he saw that the full crew on deck all suddenly had sprang to attention, as Mullens cried:

"A-tten- shun on deck!! The CAPTAIN passes on by!"

And the rotten, drunken crew stood forth with pride, well, except O'Shea, who sat on the rail, drunk, muttering invectioms, behind the crew.

"Thank you, Mullens." Captain said suddenly quite refreshed and smiling, regarding all this renewed respect on board, for he had risked very much that day before, and, indeed, he had really earned it! They had finally noticed how skilled he was! Perhaps it was not too late to set the crew on fire, with words! And such words came to him as he stood there in the sunset's firery wake!

"To the fearless Captain of our ship!" Held Francis hand up.

Captain La Fourche nodded as he accepted a glass of rum from one of the idlers, raising it high, and they all looked to him, the governor of this rabble to make a most memorable speech:

"One day you will tell all your kin what a loife ye had without a prince to rule over ye Heads, and call no man our master! Simply ye mustered courage with untamable pride and look:

The Seas Are Ours!!

“Huz-zah!”

“I have no country, my country is the Sea! And I’ll defend her, out here to the end!” Captain cried.

“Huz-zah!” all cried.

“I’ll give no quarter without a bouillon of gold!” he cried. “Nor mercy without rubies and gems!”

“Huz-zah!”

“To the great Captain, we’d follow to the end!”

“And no man can tell us what to do or where to go, for, we are our own masters upon these here waterrrrrs!” and Captain raised his drink in the air.

“To Freedom! A toast!”

“To the wily Captain Daniel La Fourche!”

“To the fabled Golden Islamorada...” started to toast Kearney. “On St Jameston’s Spit!”

As he spoke of the treasure he spooked them all!

“It all might mean the death of you!!” Captain McKinney called to them all from the port rail.

“*A Drink to Death, then!*” cried Mr. O’Shea, strutting up to the front of the rabble and he held his glass high to Cap’n’s and clinked it.

All stood straight up clinking their glasses with his and then he cried “*À Le Morte!*”

Shaw or Chandler or whoever he was took a long pull on a shot of rum. He was getting a bit drunk and the versage flowed from his lips in seasong:

*They toasted their dark alliance
With inhalation’s vigilance!
This commitment,
This pledge:
“To the end of all ends to go!”*

*For they had burned all ties
To the legitimate tide
And were enemies to King,
To state and to all
For;*

*They’d gone too far off that day, from society
And embraced their fate, most perceptively
But, toasting it rather bravely
For;*

*Though scoundrels and cutthroats,
They at least knew:
That they'd sailed too far off this time
To the edge of the known world
And into one of their own hellish makings,
And they toasted their End
As if 'twas but their friend!*

*"Alas a Serenade 'To the Death, then,' allied,
Standing together in one imbibie:
"To the Death, then. Aye!"
They'd cried!"*

Breathless, Shaw gulped a shot of rum and then continued with his song-like story:

"From thence on few notions of decency could be found amongst the crew other than: 'pillage, sack, destroy!' They could be monstrous, fiendish; yet we saw the Cap'n in discourse with his prisoner, Captain McKinney, yet manning the helm of his hold on his 'horde' most firmly.

"And, indeed they waeren't upon this here Earth; but upon a water-wourlde coursing with chastising salt-spray and mists; a venture-land of their own kind, of the predator, of the carnivore, of the feasting at the everlasting ply of thiefdom and high Seas gold haunts! Ah! They were bourne to pillage, and waere in a kind of gloom of Sea fog and of doom! O so unhumbled and proud in their freedom they were as if not of the world the rest lived!"

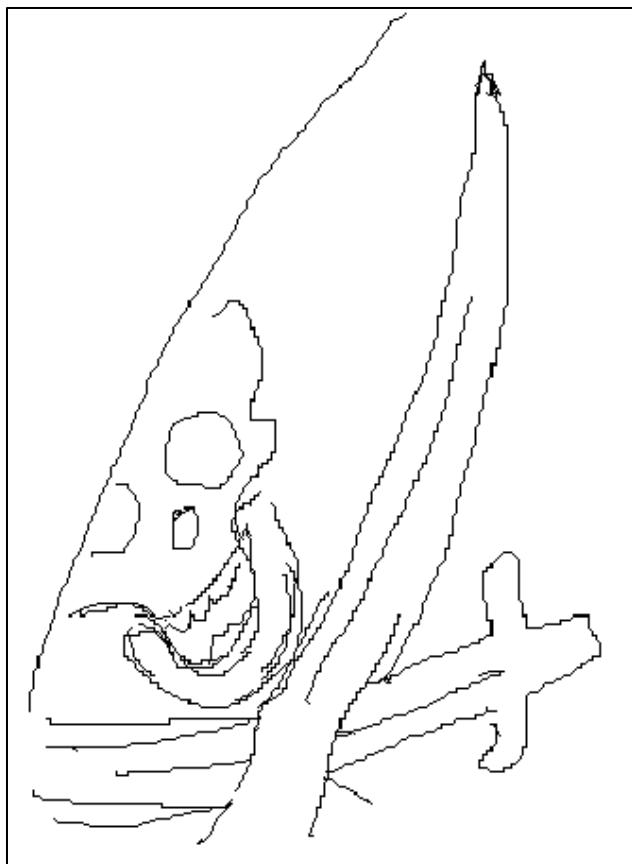
"Indeed, they had gone far beyounde us - Mates! In what we could or would ever dare do! So we marveled at them, in tales we'd later tell all our kin:

'O tales of pirates, brash and bolde
Of treasures at the fathoms deep
Of rubies and of golde!"'

100

Picture: Jolly

Roger



D.

Part II: The Treasure Map

Their Own Free Princes

“... they rob the poor under the cover of law, forsooth, and we plunder the rich under the protection of our own courage...I am a free prince, and I have as much authority to make war on the whole world, as he who has a hundred sail of ships at Sea... and this my conscience tells me...”

Captain Samuel Bellamy

From *The General History of The Pirates*

Daniel Defoe

The Map

“No Pirate story can be complete without a treasure map!” Shaw said, “And this story is no *ex-cep-shin!*”

Shaw glanced at the bar tender, Peter Gallatin, who reluctantly poured him yet another, sighing, for this time the mate was good for business and all around him sat rapt with attention and buying drinks -- but other times there were fights.

‘A few weeks they were low in *pro-vi-shuns*, once again - water - so they attacked the Northbound *Mayley May*, mostly because...“ And Shaw snickered, “...because of Captain calling her girlish “insufferable and unseaworthy name!”

But, after they effortlessly sacked her, they were about to let the crew go, having found no offensive types to war with, when one wily sailor begged Mr. Faerburne to come below and see Cap’n himself.

The sailor, Dorry O’Mally, wiry and old, stood before Cap’n, with he’s hands over head and bowed, asking politely “May I speak to ye in proivut, Sorr.”

“Go ahead...” said our Cap’n - and he waved towards Chandler and Captain McKinney. “I trust these men,” Captain McKinney did a slight bow from his spot on the rack. The kid flushed, at being referred to as a man for the very first time in his life. He’d just gained a stone and was now up to the eyebrows of most hands on t’ship.”

The old mate lowered his arms and took a seat at Captain’s table.
“What’s this all about?”

"Captain La Fourche, I have some *inforr-may-shin* that woulde be vurry valuable to eeny man, in yer *po-si-shin*, Sorr."

"What's that?" Captain La Fourche said, fiddling with his sextant.

"Sir, tharr is a treasure map on board the ship, sorr." Dorry said dramatically and he smiled a smile with missing teeth.

"Oh, really." Cap'n yawns, his eyes half-shut, like a bored cat.

"Yes, indeed, sorr."

"Which treasure?"

Dorry paused, dramatically and took a deep breath, saying:

"None other than the lost loot of St Jameston's Spit."

"Well, where is it?" Cap'n had his chin in his hand and the boy knew that he wanted to take a nap in the worst way!

"Eh, sir, um, tharr is a sort of foinder's fee involved. If'n I tell ye Cap'n La Fourche, well, I'm needin' an bit extry *compen-say-shun* fer me trouble, sorr."

"Oh, Lordy, spare me!" Cap'n spat, and he got up, pacing the deck in annoyance of missing his nap, for he was usually dreadfully tired after every sack of a ship - as if he dreaded it all! There was some story here!

"Sir, just let me aboard as one of yer crew - as an idler, and tally me one bar of gold for me in addition to the rest of the crew's take. And, of course, double rats of grog and food fer me!" he laughed. "Oy need to put some meat on these heyre bones!"

"Why should I believe you?" Cap'n whipped about, his coat tales flipping around him as he did.

"Sorr, ye have nothing to lose at this point, so why not?" Dorry said, smiling and unflustered, back, for he apparently knew that he had something of quite value.

Then they bickered vigorously for a good twenty minutes on this account - in which, the boy had observed, in the past, to be a good sign of the Captain. It was as if it woke Cap'n up, the vigorous workout of his tongue of his adept mind and ferocious verbal skills in multiple languages! He was soon vigorous and awake and a sly smile betrayed him - that he was happy. Alas, both parties were satisfied when Cap'n pours Dorry a shot o'rum and says, "Well, where is it, then?"

Dorry laughed, for he'd outfox the captain on this one for sure! He was quite sharp for such a derelict of a man. He chugged his drink and held it out for another, which Cap'n reluctantly poured.

"Well, sorr, the question is not '*where*,' but '*ooo*.'"

"Who then?" Cap'n said, twirling his mustache, like a black cat's flinging tale meant annoyance; he was soon to be getting aggravated again.

"er." Dorry announced dramatically.

"Tharr is a woman on board yer ship?"

"Aye, sorr."

"How is it that I missed that?" Cap'n said, suddenly brightening up at the idea.

"Well, they 'id 'er from ye, sorr."

"Really? Why's that?" his dark countenance and smile came back.

"Captain Morehead thought you'd mistreat 'er."

"Nonsense!"

He got up decidedly, but Dorry sat still. "Sorr, eh, thar's one other thing ye ought to know."

"Well?" he was impatient to proceed, but he plopped back down. "What?"

He poured Dorry another rum.

"Well, she aint' one to die-vulge nuttin' on account o' nobody.

"She's stubborn."

"Aye, sorr. That's why none o' us got a werd outa 'er!"

"..."

"Oye, did we troy sir, but she 'as a will of ay-ron! We put 'er off 'er rations, and sich other things, but we nare got a word out of 'er about the looot!"

"What is she doing on board your ship in the first place?"

"Well, Sorr, we found 'er in Jamaica, with noigh a'penny, cast off. She'd already been taken once by poirates. And our Cap'n Moorhead was gonna put 'er on board a slaver headed back to Savannah, when ye come along."

"Who were the pirates who first took her?"

Dorry hesitated, holding out his shot glass. Cap'n poured yet another, sighing.

"None other than Cap'n Samuel Lawless, Sorr." He announced.

Cap'n leaned back in his chair and looked out the window and brooded some time on this account. Finally he said: "I've heard about him..." he said to himself, twisting his mustache and then he got up and paced the deck, saying: "There's been many a rumor, or, perhaps you could say, 'seastory', about him and about an immense treasure trove he buried somewhere in the Caribbean before the Royal Fleet captured him. They say that thar's a cache of twenty bar of gold twenty of silver..."

"That's roight, Cap'n! And only SHE knows where!" Dorry said dramatically, smiling broadly and leaning back.

"How do you know all this?"

He sat down and poured yet another shot. Dorry quaffed it and then said:

"Well, sorr, I seen 'er come back with 'im - on a whaler's boat, fer I'd gone to shore at St Jameston's Island with another venture - fer fishing up the craggly injun river - and I reck she don't remember seeing me standing thar on the beach, fer Oy ware a'covered in mud, from our little war with the Injuns up the crick. Oh, and don't say a word about the Treasure, Cap'n, ye gotta foind another way to *sloide* it outta 'er, Sorr." And he smiled a daring smile.

"Hmmmm...Well, why you waited all this time?"

"I just waited and aboided moy time t' Sea until I come across a man, with 'is own ship and some cunning, and well, perhaps an '*andsome* man - Well, Well! A man none other than Captain La Fourche himself!"

Cap'n smiled most decadently at that: "Well, I can't wait to get my hands on *that* treasure map!" and the two pirates just laughed and laughed, even stomping the deck. And then he sat down and poured ol' Dorry another shot of rum.

And Dorry quipped back "Pour one more for yerself, Captain La Fourche - you're going to need *that* drink!"

Edith

Cap'n had O'Shea swear Dorry O'Malley on board as carpenter assistant - and idler's job, in fair seas! Cap'n had Mortensen put him in the logbook. And he already seemed quite at home on his new ship, sitting on the deck, telling seatales to all around him.

In the great room, while whistling and then humming "*Sailor Joe Mallone*," Cap'n lathered up his long, black hair and chest in the big basin with fine French soap. After rinsing, he then took an ivory combe and a boar brush to his locks for over a half an hour and terrorized them merrily with some sailor cusses, and finally got them tied into a long bushy tail. "Oh ye unruly bastards, get ye-selves in tharr!" He smiled, well-knowing that Captain McKinney, the boy and René were watching him, and, indeed, he seemed to know of the known-world's fascination with him! He then took a straight razor to his cheek bones, and cleaned up all around his chin hairs, humming as he trimmed them and washed respun his mustache hairs. Shirtless, he told the mirror: "Ye are a hairy black beast, Daniel La Fourche!" for his chest was covered in black fur and his body was muscular and strong! Oh how the ladies must have been charmed by him! He was a most handsome man indeed! Then he rinsed and towled, and changed into a fresh cotton blouse.

"Promise me you'll be a gentleman to her." Captain McKinney says, watching all this from his rack, as Cap'n buttoned up his broad, flowing sleaves.

"But of course!" he smiled back at them in the mirror, and he then cleaned his teeth with a brush.

Then he put on his outer vest and sat in the chair for his boots and Chandler had already polished them to a fine satin and the boys knelt before the Cap'n to put them on him. Cap'n, said seeing them already there for him: "Nice!" and he pulled them on. "You're working out first-class boy!"

Chandler blushed at this. "Thank you, sir."

Standing up now, he said. "How do I look?"

"Good, Sire!" I puts me two bits in.

"Be good to her, Captain La Fourche."

"Oh, Geoff, you're no fun at all!"

Cap'n dabs cologne to his face, still humming *Sailor Joe*.

"Sir, I mean that you do nothing dishonorable to her!" Captain McKinney said firmly enough from a prisoner's mouth!

To their great surprise Cap'n agreed, quite simply:

"Okay."

"Do I have you *word of honor* on that, Captain La Fourche?"

"Yes."

Captain McKinney looked flustered as if expecting some retort or argument from Captain La Fourche, who kept on grooming merrily in the mirror.

Then Cap'n grabbed the hatch: "Come on Chandler!" who got up, very surprised.

"He'll be my chaperone, Geoff." He jested to Capt McKinney, who frowned.

And then he put on his Captain top hat -- and what an imposing figure was he!
 "Lord have mercy!" Said Captain McKinney.

And Daniel – the Cap'n - laughed at him and said: "Look, Geoffrey, I'll be fighting *her* off!"

Captain McKinney gave him a gester of doubt.

And out the hatch we swept.

Chandler followed the Captain towards the deck. He had a decisive step that echoed down the ship and the boy mimicked his walk. And upon the main deck a pirate feast raged in a vengeance. Chips, the ships carpenter and fiddler, screeched out jigs and the crew pounded their fists on the bulkhead and stomped their heels on the deck and Freddy played his African drum to the beat, while O'Shea and Jonesy improvised, dancing a drunken 'Derry Rig'. Though the two ships were still cinched together, the crew already had begun their feast: pouring the captured rum down their faces, even, and it spilled all down their throats!

"Cap'n!" O'Shea uttered, freazing, rather comically, in mid-dance pose, his eyes wide in astonishment and he slurred: "Are ye goin' t' visit t' Queen?!"

Our Cap'n sighed like he ware so tired of them and all, but said glibly enough: "Yes, I have a lady to call upon, Marcus."

"A lady, seer!" the fiddle screeched to a halt and the whole gang froze in mid dance, open-mouthed. It was a comical sight.

"Yes, Mr. O'Shea, a lay-dee." Cap'n said, with a gleam and whipped off his hat in a flourish, bowing like a courtier. "A lady possibly with a TREASURE MAP!"

"OOOOOOOOOOOH!" Entire ships company cried in sharp surprise!

"And what treasure, Crew? None other than the imfamous lost treasure of Captain Lawless!" he cried.

"Hip, hip, Huz-zah!"

"Hip, hip, Huz-zah!"

"Hip, hip, Huz-zah!"

"Go on with your party, crew! I'll handle this." Cap'n ordered, but they just stood there staring as Cap'n and the boy crossed over both ships' bulwarks and onto the *Mayly May*.

"Where's the lady, Captain?" he strode up to *The Mayly May*'s Captain Morehead, who sat gagged and bound to the foremast along with his First Mate. Cap'n La Fourche whipped out the cutlass with a flourish and then he pushed the cutlass into the captured captain's eyes: "I've come to pay me respects."

The poor captain, shocked, looked up and down at Captain La Fourche's finery and then finally gagged out: "Aft the starboard boathouse, there stands a little locker."

Cap'n lowered his cutlass, and then slung it as he strode boldly aft. He came to the locker's little door. He raised his knuckles to knock and he glanced to Chandler for a split second. Could it be that the mighty Captain felt nervous?? He shook his head at himself and he knocked upon the door.

"No answer – of course." He said.

"Knock-knock-knock."

No response.

"Madam, we know you're in-nnnn tharrrrrrr!" He sung out.

No answer. He knocked again. "Madame, you have one minute to make yourself presentable and then, we are coming on in-nnnnnnnn." He sang.

He crooked his finger to Chandler and whispered in his ear. "Be on the sharp lookout for anything that might contain a map; *anything*, Chandler, I swear ye! Look fer books, charts, letters, hankees, clothes, whatever! I'll find ye some new boots for you if you find *anything*, boy!"

"Aye – Aye, sir!" I whispered back enthusiastically, fer me toes had grown roight through me old shoes, so the René had cut me big slits in them fer me toes to gangle about."

Cap'n rolled his fingers impatiently on his forearm a few moments and then put his ear to the door, listening intently, his eyes moving around as he did so. He then could see that his entire ship's company had come to stand at the *Cyclone*'s gunwhale! They stared, open-mouthed and as still as statues! Comical! He swatted them off angrily, but each one of them personally disobeyed their captain and thus didn't move an inch - such was their fascination of the scene that was surely about to happen!

"Alright, Madam, we're coming in - in ten seconds, noine, eight, seven, six, foive, four..." and he twisted the knob and pulled the hatch back before him.

"And tharr she ware."

"His eyes grew woide and he turned to Chandler – this time there weren't no doubt about the Cap'ns bewilderment for his oiyes had grown beeg and he gulped and Chandler looked - and saw the ugliest woman he'd ever seen!"

"Well, now... I guess, it warn't that she wuz ugly, perhaps she wuz just homely or plain, for, after many moons to Sea, to see a woman again, well, it conjured up illusions of petite, narrow-waisted beauties, all seventeen and fresh and clean and Madame Edith ware none of these!"

"Where a woman's body wuz delightfully fat and soft, making her a plump pillow, well, Madame ware straight as a ruler, or loike a halyard brace! Where a woman should be twisting like a hauserpipe, she ware straight as a straight-backed table chair. She had floppy bosom. Her teeth, too mouthy, filled her gums to the brim, her hair wuz tied up in a matron' bun and wuz dull blonde at her temples; and upon her pinched nose sat silver spectacles. Her clothes, worn and old ladyish, made her look about fifty, though perhaps she wuz much younger - who knew!"

She had been huddled under the spare halyard spools and was unstretching herself from under the bracing when she found the two standing before her, speechless.

"Haven't you two ever seen a woman before!" she snapped and dusted herself off aggressively. "The things I've had to do because of you pirates!" She barged right past Cap'n out the hatch! And Captain could say nothing in return!

And Chandler, remembering Cap'n's urgent orders began digging around the tack in the locker and found a little box of books hid under the heavy hemp hausers. And under that ware some clothes and papers and Chandler grabbed the lot in a heap.

"Madame, I am the Captain of the..."

"I know!"

"You will come with me, Madame."

"I protest this, sir! I am nothing but a poor English teacher and I have no purpose to do with pirates - nor can I fetch any sort of ransom!" She had even put her hands upon her hips and there ware a silent murmur of the crew that, if unchecked would very soon turn to explosive laughter at this turnabout!

Shamed as he was by this, he remembered the maps and charts. "Madame, have you all your belongings here?"

"No sir, I do not!!"

"Where are the rest?"

"In the Captain's great room in a mahogany chest!"

"Chandler, fetch them."

"Aye, Cap'n!" and he flopped the heap down on the deck and went around the corner into the greatroom and came back with the mahogany chest in a jiffy and her eyes locked onto his and she screeched:

"What in the world do you want with me, sir!" she said looking down to see all her belongings piled there before them.

Cap'n could say nothing, but he put his fingers in his mouth and whistled three times for the third mate, Cindahr, who sprang from *The Cyclone*'s ratlines, and over the water, and, in a flash, appeared on deck there before them suddenly, as if by magic. He swayed drunkenly towards her and stood inches from her eyes, and grabbed her little wrists in his gigantic hands.

"Is that how ya talk to the Capb'n, missy!"

"Aaaaaaaaaaaah!"

And she cried as he swiftly wrapped her wrists taught in tarred twine that most sailor had always stowed, wrapped around their belt loops.

"Mr. Cindahr, this young lady is going to have your compartment, so please escort her there and lock her on in. You can bunk with Mr. O'Shea for now. Thank you."

"Aye-Aye, Capb'n!" he said and then he snarled in her ear: "MOVE!"

And she screamed as he yanked her over the gunwhales and as he hauled her across the water towards *The Cyclone*'s rail a swell rocked the two ships apart and she fell between the two hulls, her twine catching an appurtanance sticking out and she hung there by her wrists, screeching.

And that's when Chandler - he had lately become much more interested in ladies - could look straight down her bosom, where he saw the tiniest scrap of a piece of yellowing paper or linen stuck way down in there! He should tell Cap'n about this!

They hauled her up to the ship and plopped her back on deck, like a fish, on her belly and she screamed and cussed them as she flapped around trying to scramble

to her feet though her hands still tied together: "You fools! You idiots!" Her dress was a sodden raggmop, her hair a wet nest ontop her head. "You almost dropped me into the Sea! A pack of idiots!!" She was so aggressive that no one said a word back to her, not even Cindahr! But he yanked her up and along the deck and away.

"Damn!" Cap'n said to Chandler, who'd just hauled her stuff to the great room on *The Cyclone* and had returned to find the captain watching the drama 'tween ships.

"She's a mighty fussy lady." Chandler says, trying to be considerate.

"Damn!" Is all Cap'n can say and he looks up at the boy in bewilderment.

"Sir, I found this." He handed Cap'n a scrap of paper showing the map of St. Michels, New St. Jameston Island. "I saw it stuffed under the hawsers."

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!" Cap'n cried out, very greatly surprised! "Most excellent, Chandler! Very good job indeed, kid!!"

I blushed and said, "Another thing, Sir, I saw a very tiny scrap of paper is sticking deep within her bosom when Cindahr hauled her 'cross gunwhales."

"In tharrr?!" he cried. His eyes popped out! He put a hand on his forehead for a split second, as if he had a fever, then, acutely aware of his 'audience,' he dropped it swiftly. But, then he smiled most decadently and put he's hand on me shoulders, and I got me new boots – as he, himself, went straight forewards and yanked them off the cook of Mayly May's, who was tied up to the back of the helm.

"Here y'go, kiddo!" and he stuffed them into m'arms. They were much bigger!

"Thank ye, Captain!"

"I troyed them on - and, alas I finally had a pair of boots as worthy as me name!" Shaw cried. He looked down at his boots he wore then. "And, folks, I'd never had a poorman's boots, nor barefeet ever since!"

"And, henceforth, I ate with the Cap'n - most every meal! And he generously taught me lots of Seamanship every day and, really that's how I grew noice and beeg and becaeme the man that I soon becaeme!!"

"Is this guy admitting to being a pirate?" is what a few were thinking in the pub around Shaw. 'Or is this just one more of his outlandish tales?'

They looked at each other with big eyes, but no one could say they weren't interested in his tale.

"They searched the great room next. Cap'n ordered McDade to grab the entire chartbook and logs of the ship. He found another stack of her books bound together in twine and sent the boy over with them to *The Cyclone*.

After another three hours of intense searching and hand-transferring of all goods across the gunwhale, Mr. O'Shea ordered them to untie lines and cast off, so the Chandler went back and partially untied the now barefoot cook, as the crew began to shove off the *Mayly May*, for he wanted to give them at least a chance, for he had been tied up recently, too.

"Come on Chandler! You want to stay there!" Mr. Faerburne called across to him.

"No sir!" I cried.

The deck crew all laughed heartily.

It was only many hours later, that it occurred to Chandler that he could have escaped then, had he wanted to! All's he would have had to say was just one word: 'Yes.'

"Then they set the poor girl adrift. I wundered if I'd ever hear of her again.

But the crowd at the table in Charleston had heard that one. It was in the news:

[News of the Mayly May](#)

From the Norfolk News Gazette, volume IV, page 1, May 1726

*The Merchant Ship "Mayly May" disappears
Off Cape Disturbance, Carolina
to hints of rumors of none other that pirate
Captain Daniel La Fourche has struck once again!
When will we let the Seas become ours once again,
or will we forever have to tread the waters on slippere feet? **MOREppIV***

The Quest for Treasure Begins

Cap'n had Izzy, the boatswain, pipe 'All Hands.' And they all came on deck.

"Set Southwest for St. Jameston Island, via Savannah." he told O'Shea "Look, Crew, we'll supply up there, with our friends, *The Duck*, then together we will all sail down the coast towards the Caribbean." And then he held up the scrap of paper for all to see. Some of them gasped when they saw it. "What do you think this is, Crew?" Then he told them about what he'd learned from Dorry O'Mally about Captain Lawless's immense Spanish treasure trove. Even captains as willful as Captain La Fourche would still discuss all strategic moves with his pirate crew; this was because of the tyranny that they had all suffered under the Royal Navy officers, and they had all agreed to be this way, even signing a concord in agreement. Their's was truly a New World democracy, one of the very first operating in the world!

"And no one is to tell the young lay-dy, who is our *guest*, the whereabouts of our heading, savvy?"

"Why's that, Cap'n?" O'Shea asked for them all. "Does she know where the treasure loyes?"

"Yessir, Mr. O'Shea and I've got to try to juice that one out her, in another way, got it? If she won't give it to us *willingly*, she could drag us all over the Caribbean looking for it. Thar's supposed to be a hundred bar of gold and a thousand pieces of eight – all without a fight, nor even a drop of blood shed!"

"Ah, the Cap'n's got to romance it out of her!" O'Shea cried.

"Cap'n smoiled most broadly."

And O'Shea laughed loudly. "Good leck with that wench!"

All hands ware laughing too, at the poor Captain's predicament.

"All roight, all roight." Cap'n said waving them down. "Ye've all had a good laugh at me expense, now let's get to work. Ye do your job... and I'll do mine."

"Aye - Aye Captain!" O'Shea said, smiling gleefully and rather too quickly he took over command, crying: "All hands! Make sail!"

Cap'n sighed to himself and let it happen, for he had other 'work' to do now! The books! Awh! He had to examine the stack of books, now, one by one, page by page. Boring!

All hands began bustling around, swarming the rigging happily, finally, finally bound for the legendary treasure trove!

The Cyclone heeled over into the wind and swiftly sprinted away from her prey and into a stiff breeze - and a league away!

Captain went into his great room and poured himself a large shot of rum.

"Not as you expected?" Captain McKinney asked, tensely watching him.

"Not at all." Cap'n answereed, sighing and plopping down on his rack and quaffing the shots in one gulp.

“Oh?”

“Just so you know, Geoffrey, you won’t have to worry about me *ravishing* her...”

The Romance novels

"Captain La Fourche had me bring all her belongings to his room and he dug through all her personal belongings now for hours, which would turn into days of this. He found nothing but papers on grammar and children's books. But what of hidden pictures or secret codes? There was nothing but the scrap of a map that the boy had cleverly found in the tack room and, of course, the one piece of linen shoved way down *in thare?*

"Is someone going to take care of her?" Captain McKinney said after a few hours of this toil, interrupting Cap'n's feverous concentration.

"Cindahr..." Cap'n answered, distractedly, while digging through her mahogany chest.

"Oh, please, Captain La Fourche, please - not him."

Cap'n looked up sharply, distracted and furious.

"Sir, I am not one to interfere in your business..."

"You do that every damn day, *Geoffrey!*" Cap'n snapped "...because I *let* you do that! Got it?!"

Chandler expected Captain McKinney to cower in his corner after such a fierce rebuke, but Captain McKinney kept asserting: "But, Cindahr, is a savage man, Captain! He probably hasn't even fed her, or given her any sanitary provisions for a lady! Please, Captain La Fourche, he treated me most savagely; can you imagine how he will treat her?"

"Alroight!" Cap'n hissed and then told me "Go fetch René!" When the cook came in Cap'n spat to him in French that Edith had to take the cook's stock room on the deck, and that he would take care of her needs now. Switching to English, abruptly, he told René would have to berth with the crew - but René was very popular with them and René shrugged and took the Captain's decision merrily.

"Oui, oui, monsieur Capitain." René replied.

"Merci, René - toujours." Cap'n replied grateful for René's loyalty and he poured him a shot of rum and after Rene quaffed it, he gestured for the cook to go back to the galley.

"Are ye happy now?" Cap'n turned, still mad, to Captain McKinney.

"Thank you, sir!"

Cap'n waved him off complete irritation and was back to the books with his looking glass.

And Captain kept at the books for days. And now he had a scrap of paper to remove from her bosom, so delicately as to find the treasure! How was he going to do this?? It annoyed him to his very bone!

But the next few days found the Captain listlessly, reading her small stack of books. He had gone over every page in detail, by now, for secret markings that somehow would help direct them to the spot of the buried treasure on St. Jameston Island's; now he read her books out of pure boredom, yawning as he did so; and, other

times falling asleep right in his chair, as the pages made his eyes so droopy and he'd nod off and drop the book to the deck and wake up sharply with a snap. Sometimes he couldn't make it through a single paragraph without nodding off. If he ever needed a sleeping tonic - this was the stuff! Dull!

The other Captain, by now his rather long term roommate, read Edith's bible; after Cap'n had gone through every single page with the looking glass. And McDade joined Cap'n on the great table where they spent two days going over every logbook entry and map from the *Mayly May*.

Cap'n had began to notice that certain pages of the novels were well worn, and he had gone over and over them with a fine looking glass, but they didn't contain any marks or codes. As he read and re-read them, he concluded that these pages were simply her favorite passages for he even detected bits of food and probably drips of tea. It was as if she had read them over and over again and maybe even fell asleep every night reading their words. They certainly made him sleepy!

"Hmmmmm..." now he realized that he was looking into her mind - of what she liked, and of who she was. She had been so terribly embarrassing to him in front of the crew, so, even he, the 'terrifying' Captain La Fourche, had not dared to call her back in!

The books were all rather silly to him, as he read on. After a while out of intense boredom he said his thoughts out loud: I'm throwing the book across the room, if I hear one more phrase like: '*Taking her in his manly arms!*' or worse: '*He ravished her in the boudoir...*'

"Mon Dieu!" he cried.

And he looked over and he saw Captain McKinney was covering his mouth, trying to hide a big smile on his face, and he was even trembling with laughter.

"Not going so well, sir, the romance books, Captain?" He said from under his hand, trying to say without laughing, but he was shaking uncontrollably.

"No sir!" He said shaking his head. "I should force *Ye* to read these books! It's like pulling teeth!!" and he snapped the book shut.

And suddenly they both broke out in hearty laughter!

Each man was holding their own bellies, they laughed so hard.

"Haa! Haa! Haa!" Captain McKinney heaved. "It's funny!"

"By Gawr!" Cap'n laughed, helplessly, at himself, "It IS!"

"Let me read them and you can read the bible, Captain La Fourche!!" He said, holding the book out to him - always hoping to save everyone.

"I *have* read that one." Cap'n says, still laughing so hard, all the tension and fear released and he laughed and laughed!

"You have? All of it??"

"I have, indeed!"

"I'm pretty surprised..." Captain McKinney admitted.

"I read a lot at Sea. Shoot, I'd rather read that then this trash!"

"You would???"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Please, take it then, sir." Captain McKinney held out the good book to the dark pirate.

"No, sir, I have to get through this rubbish, first!"

"Well, I wouldn't want to deprive you of such a fine romance!" and his belly was shaking once again in helpless torrent of laughter.

"By gawr, Geoffrey, you actually have a sense of humor!" he had thought Captain McKinney to be an overserious, religious bore. They never had any humor these religious folks!

"I do sir!" he said, his belly shaking now. "The fierce Pirate Captain forced to be reading ladies romance novels in order to find his treasure! It's funny!"

Cap'n, laughed hard and helplessly at himself, wiping his eyes, he laughed. "Yer roight, tis verrry funny indeed!"

And with neither of them askin' I poured them both a shot of rum. And I snuck a gulp meself.

"Can you not say God doesn't have a sense of humor, sir?"

"Yes, He does, indeed!" Daniel laughed, holding his aching belly.

"Cheers!" and the sober Captain actually drank one shot, whereas I poured a few more for me Cap'n, and they toasted ladies books, clinking glasses together:

"They're so silly, so inane!"

"Not to a woman, my dear, Captain La Fourche!"

"I guess not! Does yer wife read them?"

"Yes, I suppose she does – when I've been gone a long time."

"Ye allow it?"

"Yes, it just gives her a little romance at times; women need that."

"Funny, you'd think Madame Edith wouldn't want all that – she's more like a man herself."

"Aye, Captain La Fourche, that's WHY she reads them so much."

"But, the guys in these books, they're not heroes at all! They're all rascals...even *Pirates!* They're not gentlemen at all, Captain McKinney! I don't get it!"

"I guess it's a fantasy for women - like taming the savage beast."

"Yeah..." Cap'n scratched his chin: "Yeah, I think Madame needs a little romance in her life..." and then, an idea suddenly brightened his face and he smiled most broadly: "Yes, Captain, Edith needs a little romance from a *REAL* rascal..." he pointed his thumb to his chest: "ME!"

And, how he laughed! He through his head back and laughed and laughed and laughed.

Now a little 'enlightened' about things, Cap'n read some more and I kept the rum a'coming "Ye know what, this isn't so bad with a li'l rum!"

And the other gentleman just laughed helplessly - what else could he do?

After a supplement of swordplay with Nico, Cap'n went right back to lounging in his rack and reading, and after a while he needed no more rum, for mirth spilled out

from his rack in great peals of laughter for days. And he often read long passages to Captain McKinney and the boy:

“And the Captain of the Ship took her in his strong, manly arms at the helm and kissed her under the sails and under the m-mooooooooon!”

“Ha! Ha! Ha!” they laughed heartily together; it was so sappy and full of foolish nonesense like kissing on the quarterdeck! No man *ever* did that! In fact, many ships even forbade women altogether, except for Captain’s Wives, or as passengers on emigrant packets - and they surely never went on deck kissing people!

“Is this what women want these days: fiction, lies and foolishness?”

“I suppose so.” Captain McKinney said, for once, didn’t seem to have all the answers to life’s questions - especially when it came to women!

“Did you ever have your wife aboard, Geoffrey?”

“Yessir, I did. I took her from Bristol to Searsport, Maine, then to Kingston, Jamaica, to Sierra Leone, Africa coast and then back to Bristol.”

“Ye ever kiss her by the helm!”

“Oh! No sir!

“Even under a full m-m-mooooooooon!?”

“Oh no sir!” Captain McKinney laughed at the very idea!

And Cap’n tossed the book across the room, and it bounced off the bulkhead and split in two, sending pages flapping all over the deck. And then, rethinking things, he laughed at himself and jumped up, gathered it all back up and resumed his reading and long days of snickering.

Three days later - after several swordfights and three shots of rum a day, Cap’n finally ordered Cindahr to fetch Madame Edith from the cook’s shack. He looked over to the other Captain and gulped and Captain McKinney couldn’t help at laugh at the predicament of the ‘ferocious’ pirate Captain before him!

“Good, luck to you, Captain!” He said, covering his mirth with his hand.

“By Gawr, here goes nothing Geoffrey!” he said, and his eyes opened large, for he could hear her coming and fussing with Cindahr all the way back aft! Then the hatch flew open - and - bang! - and before them appeared Madame Edith.’

“Thank you, Mr. Cindahr.” He managed to tell the Third Mate, “Please untie her. Thank ye.”

And Cindahr left cussing her: “Ye tawdry ol’ wench!” and slamming the hatch behind him and she jumped.

“How are ye today, Mademoiselle Edith?”

“Not very well for being cooped up for one entire week!” she said in such a rage that tears dropped all around her eyes and she rubbed them off roughly with her sleeve - not a bit ladylike.

“I terribly apologize for our treatment of ye, Madame.” He said leaning back in his captain’s chair, calmly surmising her.

“I don’t see the point of keeping me aboard your ship, Captain!”

"Let's just say ye amuse me, Edith. I don't get so many female passengers aboard these days."

"So no wonder! You are a pirate!"

"Yes, Ma'am." He said to her. "Please take a seat."

And the boy found her one.

As she kneeled over to sit down, he peered over and plainly saw the tiny scrap of yellowed paper or clothe still stuck deep within her bosom and he smiled a bit at that – it had to be very real treasure that she kept so tightly next to her bosom!! The kid was so sharp to see it, for he barely saw it for himself! There was little doubt about the treasure map now! It was deeply lodged in the bosom of Madame Edith!! Hope's warmth returned to him and he smiled!

He looked up from her bosom and saw the feral scowl of the lady in an almost animal-like snarl of disapproval. He could have grabbed it right out of there if he had wanted to!

But, ah, supposed it didn't contain enough information in itself, no, still the best course of action was the romantical approach! She had to *willingly* give it up! He went and sat behind his charting desk and fiddled with the compass - trying to compose himself before her fierce gaze!

She looked from side to side and saw Captain McKinney sitting there, well composed; the Bible open before him. Captain La Fourche had removed the shackles for a whole week now and he was very clean and composed within himself, so Edith did not realize that he, too, was a fellow captive.

And he said to her. "How are you today, Madame?"

She was so shocked to find him on board that she uttered "Are you one of them too, sir?"

"Madame, this is my colleague and friend, Captain Geoffrey McKinney. I am simply transporting him back to his wife and family in Savannah." He lied so easily, that Captain McKinney glanced over to him, amazed. "His ship lost its mainmast in a Nor' Easter off of Cape Hatteras."

"That's where I am headed too! To Georgia, sir!" she uttered. "To Savannah? Would you take me there too Captain?" she asked most desperately. "Are we headed West?"

"What is there, Madame? Your family?"

"I have a position waiting for me in the house of Captain David Wentworth!"

"A position? You're a maid?" he grinned.

"Indeed, not sir! I am a teacher of English, and have been sent for all the way from Boston to teach his children proper, Queen's English!" She said imperiously. "I only hope that it has not been filled as I have been detained by endless scores of pirates!!"

"We'll see." Bait! Gotcha gurl! Now he could relax and so he leaned back in his chair and boldly put his feet on the table struts and smiled so indulgently at her. "We have some business to attend to off Hispaniola first."

Stricken, she said "Some business! You mean more pirate attacks, don't you?"

"Why, of course Madam!" he smiled. "*It's what we do.*"

"How come you didn't just take him back when you sailed right off the Carolinas!" she bickered, realizing, quite possibly, that he was lying deliberately. Then she saw the big 'X' scar carved on poor Captain McKinney's face and her mouth dropped. "You're lying Captain!" she shot out anyway!

"Possibly." He said so succinctly that she stomped her heals under the chair!

"Endless Pirates! You're my second set of them!"

"Such terrible leck." He soothed, tilting his head, but there was a heavy layer of sarcasm underneath it.

"You're nothing but a pack of thieves and liars!" she addressed them both now in a rage.

"Ah, come, Madame, where's yer manners?"

"I'd now be very happily employed with a proper, law-abiding Captain in Savannah, instead of wondering the Caribbean with a pack of scoundrels and vagabonds! I've had years of this! Years!!"

Hmmm, Captain Wentworth... she had said this name several times by now, not making any mention of the Lady Wentworth of Savannah, and he theorized she could have some sort of romantic attachment to that Captain, just like in the books. But it seemed kind of far-fetched, for she was entirely so plain.

He looked at her, she was a spinster, and this position meant everything to her.

"Well, his proper captainship will have to wait some more... Poor guy!" he said, tilting his head, patronizingly, and by now, quite enjoying his act.

She looked down at his feet on the struts of the table, with such ill manners and spat: "You, Captain, are no gentleman!"

He laughed: "And ye, Madam Edith, are no lady!"

"How dare you say that to me!"

"How dare you say that to me!" he mocked her back in high-pitch, falsetto.

And she put her hands on her hips and her eyes grew wide in fury!

He suddenly grabbed his cutlass and she winced, but he banged the overhead three times with it, for the Third Mate and yelled out "Cindahr!"

"Oh no sir! Not him again!" she cried out as the Third Mate strode back in and savagely yanked her out of her seat and out of the hatch.

"Ah! That's wasn't so bad after all!" He said, opening the windows to the great room to glance at the cloud deck of cirrus to the West, and then, he looked at his charts before him - to calculate the time needed to sail to the isles of St. Jameston's Spit -- and into a woman's heart!

The Library

The next day the hens had been productive in the fair weather allowing René to prepare a little bit of an improvement on their normal chow ofhardtack ala weavels de la crème! Even the boy sat with the two captains and O'Shea eating poached eggs and drinking hot tea. Cap'n often entertained at his table in fair weather and it was an honor to sit there and eat with him when he ate with his officers.

The Cap'n lounged back, indolently reading one of her books to them. How they laughed. After a while, he snickered. "I think, Geoffrey, that we should have the company of Madame Edith, herself." And he tapped three times on the overhead with his cutlass for Cindahr to grab her.

O'Shea got up in disgust to leave. "I'll check on starboard jig, Cap'n." he obviously did not like her, for a jig was nothing on board their ship except an excuse. He wanted to leave the captain's great room.

"Whut, ye don't loike our new lay-dee, Mr. O'Shea?" Cap'n teased him

"No, sir, I do not!"

"Aye." Cap'n said back. They had agreed - for once.

"Next time we try to land the First Mate somethun a bit prittier!" O'Shea cried.

"Aye!" Cap'n laughed.

"We need a port-o-call, Cap'n!"

"We'll try to find ye our next gold in girls." Cap'n teased back.

"Never out here. Girls spoils in the open ocean!"

"Aye, they are perishable cargo, indeed." Cap'n quipped.

"But, there'll ne'er be any good with a wemon aboard, Cap'n!"

"No."

"What we needs is a port of call in Port Royale sir!"

"Aye." Cap'n muttered. Such danger!

And the First Mate strode out the hatch, growling as he ran straight into Edith. She scaredly slid by him and came into the room and saw the feast set before her and, Cap'n noticed that she gulped.

Still holding the book, he said "Well, Madam Edith, how are ye today?"

"My books, sir!" she gasped, at seeing the pile by his bedside.

"Yes, madam." He read on, ignoring her standing there, until he could hear her stomach growl.

"Won't ye join us?" Cap'n La Fourche said, casually gesturing with his book in hand.

"Yessir!" She sat down, and Chandler served her eggs that she gobbled up quickly.

"Such lady-like manners." He chided from behind the book cover, shaking his fingers at her as he read.

"May I have some more, Captain?"

"Chandler." He said still from behind the book, waving at the kid with a silver fork.

A while passed in silence as she ate, and then she looked up, with acid in her eyes - at the scoundrel who was reading her ladies books!

"What are you doing, reading my books, sir, these are for *ladies*!"

"Yes, Madame, but they're so much *fun*."

"So, you're going to steal my books as well!"

"No."

"May I have them back, then, please?

"You may check them out, one by one," he quipped "like a library." And even Captain McKinney had to keep eating to keep the smile off his face.

"Ah! Well I never! Having to check out my own books! Disgraceful!"

Captain McKinney gave her a stern look that said: 'Watch your tone, young lady.'

"Which one would you like first?" Cap'n had leaned over and grabbed the stack and thumbed through the titles, saying with a mock London upper cut accent: "Love by the Wah-ter-falls" by Madeleine Louisa St. Clair?"

"Agh!"

"Oh, here we go 'Summer Love by Gull Pt. Lagooooon.'" He sang.

"..."

"No?"

"..."

"Okay. Here's one ye'll *looove*, Edith, "Romance on the High Seas" by Victoria Chase." And he handed it to her and she yanked it away fast.

"Too-too ladylike." He chided from behind the book.

"They're *my* books!"

Captain McKinney looked at her again.

"Ye'll like that one," Cap'n teased. "It's about a fair, young lady that has a romance out to Sea." And he yanked it right back from her hands and read a couple of passages to her:

"...And upon the magical waters thence arose a love from the very busom of her heart..."

"You're making fun of me through my books!" she cried, as he handed back her book.

"Only a little." He admitted smiling, tilting his head, stirring his tea with a silver spoon.

Tears of indignation formed in her lashes and she roughly swiped them off with her sleeves. "I guess you're having a lot of fun at my expense, Captain!" She cried quite bitterly.

"Yes Ma'am." He said unabashedly, while still reading, utterly composed in himself.

"Huff!" she uttered.

Captain McKinney forced himself to focus into the scriptures that he was reading, for the pirate captain was toying with her in a fun manner, and it didn't seem

to be disrespectful in any way and he had to admit he was rather enjoying their repartee and he had to focus to keep the smile off his face.

"Tea, Edith?" Cap'n asked, holding the pot with his pinky stuck out in such a manner that he was mocking good manners. Captain McKinney burst out in laughter, right out.

She spun a little dizzily, tilted way off guard. "Yessir!" She whispered. And Cap'n poured her a hot cup and delicately spooned heaps of sugar and cream. She gasped a little at its pleasure.

"Did ye hear that politeness, Captain McKinney? So, she can be ladylike, eh?"

Captain McKinney looked up from Exodus 2:6 "Yes, Captain." He said and tried to go back to Pharoah's daughter pulling baby Moses out of the bulrushes.

"You don't seem much like a pirate, sir." She said, sizing him up as he read the Bible.

"He's not." Cap'n snapped.

No one spoke for a moment and Cap'n pretended to be reading, but he was actually contemplating the next move, of course, and he watched her fidget at the table before the two men, when a thought struck him:

"Shoooosh! How come ye're not chiding *him* for reading *yer* Boible."

"Ah! It *is* my Bible!" She said looking down at it. It's the one she read to her charges from.

"I'm terribly sorry, Madame!" Captain McKinney flushed, at once violently ashamed of himself for reading a pirated Bible! "Would you like it back?"

"Yes!" she said.

And Captain McKinney reluctantly shut the cover, carefully, and was about to hand it back when Captain La Fourche said "She may not have it back, sir."

"Why is that, sir, it is her book?"

"I know, but, she already has one book *checked out* - and - she may not have it back, sir."

He carefully took it back from her, and she noticed his attitude and deference to the other Captain. But she ploughed on recklessly anyways. "Captain, I have already read this book ten times. I would like to have my Bible back."

"No."

"Why not!"

"Because, Captain McKinney's not finished with it yet." He treated her like a little girl.

She looked, he was in the Old Testament now – it'd be a while - and he had already returned to Exodus and she sighed in frustration; this other captain was afraid of the pirate captain too.

"Keep reading, Geoffrey." Captain ordered him, slightly and Captain went back to reading, or pretending to read.

"Yes, sir,"

She sighed.

This sigh of hers caused Cap'n no end of delight, and he said, while pretending to still be engrossed in the romance book, stirring his tea with his silver spoon: "Ye are in my custody now, Edith, to do as I so please. Isn't that right, Captain McKinney?"

"Yessir." He said obediently.

She gasped suddenly realizing Captain McKinney was actually his prisoner too! Although, he was one well kept and one in whom held the Captain's highest respect.

"Do ye even know who I am Madam Edith?"

"You are the pirate captain, sir!" she was already back to imperiosity of this ilk: 'My! My!'

"Indeed, Edith, but which one? Have ye not even bothered to learn me real and true name yet?"

"No, sir. I've been locked up for an entire week by myself!"

"Well, that's best for yer sake, Edith, for, if ye had known my name and still behaved so unladylike, I would have not been quite so kind to ye today."

And Captain McKinney looked up to her and nodded agreement quite soberly; and she began to wonder who the devil was he! Though he had a seafaring sailors accent, with a twist of something else... something Latinate in it, he actually had excellent and even commanding English and this had thrown her off some. He wasn't that *French* pirate, was he?

And, then, that name was off in the background of her head now, a name so full of infamy and dread! Could he be the terrible, the savage captain that had terrorized all of the colonial coast? Ah, what name did they chant in the pubs? What name had she'd heard in the streets on market day? It was coming to her, and she looked at him, quite clean, composed and mannerly, stirring his tea with a silver spoon, while reading her ladies books!! Surely this wasn't the same man, the most terrible, the murderous Captain La...

"You may be dismissed." He said and tapped his cutlass on the overhead, three times, for the Third Mate, Cindahr, once again.

The Sunset

The next day was fresh and nice all day, so René set out the table on the quarterdeck, in the afternoon, and the boy served both of the Captains and all three mates. It was the captured tea and cakes from *The Mayly May* and it was almost as good as rum at putting them all in a jolly, good mood. And even O'Shea was full of laughter and good cheer.

Cap'n sat back in his great chair at the head of the table and flippantly read the romances to them and they all laughed heartily, including the idlers mending sails and spars and the hands on watch, aft.

The Trades blew quite steadily and *The Cyclone*, braced so well, zipped her way along happily; while the rest of her crew, forward, sang working songs, or chantees, as they holystoned the foredecks, lashed sails, fixed the riggings, and so on. They might be pirates, but they were sailors too, busied with the many tasks of seamanship and it was always set to song. The Royal Navy had tried to ban seasongs, but the freeman, the pirates sang like birds all day long. It gave them such joy in their burdensome tasks. Why was the Navy so harsh to them?

The sun poked around the lone towering cumulus off in the distance and the sky looked peachy and, he snickered to O'Shea: 'Awww...It's so romantical!'

"Aye, sir. How's the new goirl friend?"

He looked at his First Mate "She's a tough lass."

"I see." He said. "If she won't supply us with the map, Daniel, what'll become of her?" he asked.

He could feel the pressure behind the First Mate's question.

"She will; she will. Just give her some time, Marcus." *Or else?*

"Ye have yer work cut out fer you, Daniel. Ye wouldn't see me with her for all the gold in the Spanish Main!"

"Aye." He said swallowing. He stood up, now and called out everyone on deck: "All hands!"

The boatswain blew his pipe call: 'Attention on Deck' and everyone stood up on deck and came back aft, to the quarterdeck , where Cap'n stood.

"Okay, I'm going to have a little chat with our *young lady* on board. Now, don't any of ye mention our real course or business with her. Keep it all mum." He waved them off, to go back to their work.

"Aye, Cap'n!" Faerburne cried. "Good leck to ye, sir!"

"Thanks. Cindahr, fetch me Madame." He sat back down and turned to the Third Mate.

"Aye, Cap'n, of course, but mayn't another git her? Whoy always me, Cap'n?"

Cap'n smiled broadly, "Cuz, you're always so *delicate* with her."

"Oh, aye, Cap'n!" he said nodding, getting the irony, and putting his tea cup down.

"I want to show her how life could be if she chooses not to cooperate."

"I folla yer reasoning, suh." He said, smiling malevolently as he got up.

He went forwards and got her, hauling her aft, by the twine. She stumbled up the ladder, curtsied to the Captain, and then stood there most uncomfortably at the head of the table where Cap'n sat with all his mates.

"As orrrdered, sah." Cindahr said, with a flourish of his cap.

"Thank you, Mister Cindahr. Please untie her. Thank you." And the Third Mate went away muttering to himself: "Nare in moy toime t' Sea, ware Oy fiddlyng with sich an ol'lady-goat - She!"

"Well, Madame, how are you today?"

"I'm fine, sir." But her voice trembled.

She appraised him as he drank his hot tea; he had manners and held his teacup like a gentleman - and not the brute that he was!

"Ye're not your usual, bristly self today, Madame Edith."

"No, Captain La Fourche." She answered, and a chill went down her back as she had said it!!

"Ah, you've learned my name -- *how charming.*"

So it was him! She could scarcely believe it!!

"Yessir!" She stood there, in front of the officers, reeling a bit and then swallowed deeply before them. Blood rushed to her head and by her ears in a torrent. She could feel the entire crew's eyes upon her and the hairs at the back of her neck stood up. She had to steady herself and she reached for the back of O'Shea's chair, and then saw that he, too, was staring back up, his large hazel eyes locked onto hers, in wonder.

So, it was him! Captain La Fourche! How unruly she had been towards him!! He looked intently at her now as if reading all this in the back of her head.

Did he, himself, know that he'd put the entire coast of the New World on tiptoes? Did he know? Probably! She stood in the presence of a... What was he? An enemy? An invasion? An armada? No, he was larger than all of that! He and his crew were more like... like a Nor'easter, or a hurricane, and all in the colonies were bracing for him to come ashore; to land, like he had in Santa Maribel, in a force of five ships! Then he had sacked an island off the Carolinas; and then Charleston had trembled yet before his force!

And yet there he sat before her, with his officers, like a baron of fine manners, with the power to decimate, and yet to charm! In short, she stood before a royal and wily charismatic presence! He ruled his own realm, *The Sea*, with such sovereignty!

"Well, it's always good to know whom you're dealing with, isn't it Madame?" he interrupted her wildly streaming thoughts.

"Yessir!" She said, earnestly nodding her head. "I apologize for my behavior, sir!!"

"Did someone tell ye me name, Madame?"

"No sir, I - I just figured it out on my own."

"Ye've heard of me then?" he snickered.

"Oh, yessir!"

"I don't exactly get the latest news, y'know."

"Oh, yessir, they know you all along the coast of America!"

"Really?" and he smiled, with wide open eyes, that dropped down her body and undressed her! Few garments had thick enough weave and pile to hide the female bosom from that ravenous stare! And, even as she squirmed in front of him she thought: 'So! He's a man after all! And, so, what did he want from me!?'

"Pray, tell me more."

"Uh...?" she stumbled. All the officers were gazing upon her, intently.

"Tell me what they say."

"Oh? Ah...Well...Pub songs are sung of you. That's how I heard of you, sir, from rum songs spilling out into the market place."

He just laughed, his head backwards, completely delighted. "Rum songs! Really?"

"Children jump-rope to your name." Their rhymes were like incantations. She could hear, in her head, her own charges, The Miller children's happy little songs when they were younger.

He was scratching his chin, like a cat does when happy. "Pray tell, Madame."

She squirmed and uncomfortably sung out before them:

*'When Cap'n La Fourche sails the Seas,
Your life,
Your life
Is in jeop-ard-y!
Jump-ing jumping Jeop-ard-y!
Jump-ing jumping Jeop-ard-y!
La Fourche! La Fourche! La Fou-che!!
La Fourche! La Fourche! LA FOURCHE!!'*

"Ha!" he laughed, "I'll have to have you repeat that to our ship's song master! Chips!" he waved to the carpenter who was kneeled before a beam, hacking away at it with a saw. He dropped his tools, irritably, and came aft immediately.

"Yessir!"

"We've a new tune, sing it Edith!"

And she uncomfortable sang it out again.

When she finished, Cap'n said. "Got it, Chips?"

"Aye, Cap'n!"

"Okay." And he waved the busy carpenter back to his trade, fixing the spars damaged in the attack.

The wind began to pick up a pleasant tempo and the ship herself started a lulling curtsy through the seaswells. And Edith squirmed before them.

"And, so, Edith, does my real appearance match my image?"

"No sir."

"How's that??

"..." she was at a loss of what to say.

"Go on, tell me."

"I – well, I pictured someone more like Blackbeard." She hadn't imagined a man so charismatic and even lordly.

"I could look more like him, I suppose, if I wanted to." He said stroking his goatee.

"Don't." she said so simply that he laughed out:

"Ha! Is that a woman's view?"

"Yessir."

"Ah! Good." He said, "I don't get too much of that around here, y' know."

She looked back at him doubtful over her spectacles. By gawr, she looked ever the part of a school marm! He bit his tongue.

"May I respectfully ask your purpose of having me aboard?"

"It's the same I do with Capt McKinney, *ye amuse* me." He smiled and realized what he had just said was actually quite true, and he wondered why that was so, for, she wasn't a beauty - and he'd had his share of beauties!

"Amuse you sir? How so?"

"I don't often have time to discourse with such an educated lady." And that was the truth. There was something insubstantial here and he was very shocked to find himself inclined towards her after all!

"Oh! I'm being a terrible bore!" he declared and he stood up and offered her Cindahr's chair and poured her a cup of tea, himself. The boy standing there just gawking at the little drama set before him, René nudged him and he then fetched her sugar and cakes to go with her tea.

"Thank you, Captain La Fourche." *What do you want from me!*

"Wow, I don't know if I can get used to ye being so polite to me!"

"I'm trying sir."

She looked down at her tea, this kindness was something she had not foreseen and now she had a nothing to say! He wanted something from her, that's for sure - that could only be one or two things - OR both!

But Captain seemed to enjoy talking to her: "The saying 'Red sky at night-Sailor's delight" is true. It's a sign of fair weather. I bet you both don't know who first said that in literature - basically."

"I have no idea sir."

"I'm surprised! But it's in one of your books, Edith!"

"It is?" she could not recall that anywhere in her books!

"Think hard."

She could not fathom anyone saying that in any of the books she owned!

"In the Gospel of Saint Matthew." He finally revealed, smiling. "Those disciple guys, they were all sailors, y'know."

They all looked at him, stunned, especially Captain McKinney, for it was true. And then both captains then laughed heartily - possibly at the large incongruities between disciples and pirates, although both, indeed, were sailors.

"Yes, Ma'am. Anyways as I was a'saying, we shall have good weather tonight, isn't that right Captain McKinney "...red sky at night - sailor's dee-light!"

"Yessir, I do believe so." And he lifted up his teacup to Cap'n: "To Good Weather, God-Willing."

And she lifted her teacup as well and he raised his cup to hers, boring his eyes into hers and she had to steady the teacup with her other hand.

"Madam, I regret that ye're too nice! Now, I may have to order you back to be yerself!"

"Oh, no sir!" she cried, bitterly confused.

And he threw back his head and laughed a long roll of a laughter that could be heard by the goddess on the bowsprit.

The watch rang in two bells for taps and Captain stretched. Speaking of red, he thought, in the distance there was a blotch of pink clouds, hailing the sunset and it was now time to relax! And he stood up. "Chips, get yer fiddle! We shall have music, my friends, music for the lay-deee!" René called the young kid away, for the galley, and the mates went down to the main deck to enjoy themselves in the dance - or supervise it. She had him now to herself!

As she sipped she noted the zest and joy that went into the music and the jigs. "They do seem to be enjoying themselves."

And he narrated: "On a regular ship, Edith, most men are put to a savage amount of work - they never ever get to relax like this - and we do it all the time - in fair weather everyday, even!"

"Yes, Captain." She said, vividly recalling the difference between the stern, subdued Captain Morehead's crew and the fun, jovial crew of Captain Lawless.

"Why do they do that, Captain?"

"Because the officers feel if they don't overwork them, they won't mutiny! It's the captain's way of controlling them."

"I see." She said, rather understanding, though she had never lived under such tyranny herself.

"But, I never have to do such things! Edith, with me, we take time to enjoy ourselves and," he pointed outwards, "and to enjoy a glorious day at Sea."

She had heard that pirates held a crude form of democracy on board, and it was true, but, she saw that they all obeyed their Captain smartly. Of course he was the captain, that's why, but as she learned as she watched them dance then, that they all followed him smartly because they both loved - and - feared him.

"Chips, play us our new tune!" he ordered and they all danced it in a jig with such delight that she found herself reluctantly smiling wide at them.

"La Fourche! La Fourche! La FOURCHE!"

"You see, Edith," he said raising his cup to her: "I'm not one-hundred percent bad!"

As the stars came out that night, Cap'n figured out another juicy little angle on Edith: she rather enjoyed the superiority of being a English teacher, and he could play on her pride - and - also now, was an excellent time as any to improve his appearance as a possible Englishman – you never knew when such a guise could come in handy, to escape himself, even, for he was well known as a Frenchman. He scratched his chin, remembering the last time he had shaved off everything to avoid detection and had slipped right through their very fingers, once again, in the very town of Norfolk in the Commonwealth of Virginia!

English Lessons

As she awoke the next morning, the men on deck had just begun holystoning the deck near to her cabin. And she opened her eyes and saw how pleasantly the peach colored light streamed in from cracks in the bulkhead. It was a beautiful day to Sea.

A caliope hit a chord, probably in C minor, and some crew cleared their throats.

“...now Patsy, my Patsy waere a goirly full, goirl...” began the lead, Cabbage. “and I wanted and begged for to give her a twirl...”

At least twenty voices answered back in rich, four part harmony from the top of the mizzenmast to the bow of the ship! Though the words were so bawdry, it was such a beautiful and unexpected chorus that it stung her and she found herself gasping and crying as they sung magnificently back:

“Come on my lass, please give us a twirl!”

“Come on my lass, please give us a twirl!”

*“She is a roit girl-fully gurl,” sang Cabbage.
and upon my arm she’d give me a swirl”*

And the crew repeated:

“Come on my lass, please give us a twirl!”

“Come on my lass, please give us a twirl!”

Captain La Fourche was right, his crew was most joyful and free! Unlike the austere Royal Navy, *this* crew was allowed to sing away on most pleasant days at Sea; and they knew a long list of songs to sing. Not one man was out of key! She realized that the instrument accompanying them helped them stayed in tune, for their Cap’n had obviously allotted an instrument to guide them, all day. She soon found out that a talented pirate named Windman Jones, had the fortunate job, in good weather, to play the calliope and he was an idler all day. And thus they all stayed in tune and developed rich and echoing harmonies as they sailed. Arduous work was so much easier if one sang, thus, someone cared about them – none other than their captain!

And, how the *Glory of the Sea* resounded through their fine voices; even though they were pirates, their songs, like the whalesongs, were, paradoxically indeed, a part of its wonder, as well!

She was rather becoming an expert on pirates after having been, now, a prisoner of two different crews for many months to Sea! But Captain Lawless’s men had not sung with half the quality of this ship! It was a happy, well-run ship, here, and not a run-down derelict, drunken, half-sinking misery! It spoke to her volume about the quality of the captain of her, Captain La Fourche. He was most interesting man, indeed!

And then she was always pondering and pondering her new overlord – Captain La Fourche. What he could possibly desire from her? She knew she was not pretty; and his advances actually acutely embarrassed her! But, goodness, every time she

went to him, she felt such things she hadn't in a long time. "Oh, well. What do I have to loose?" she asked herself. Then a severe image came to her, from her past, of arching shame, answering this self-questioning, and thus she chided back to herself: "Plenty, Edith! Stay on your toes!"

A knock on her door, interrupted her thoughts. It was the kid, and he called through the door for her to come the captain's great room. After she dressed and brushed her hair, she found the door unlocked, to her great surprise and she walked alone, by the knealing, singing sailors; unescorted by that brute, Cindahr.

"Good mourning, Madame!" they all cried, looking up.

And unaccustomed to their good graces, she uttered back, in surprise: "Good Morning, gentlemen!" and a second later she passed by the lead man, Cabbage, who was on his knees with the caulking hammer and she suddenly told him "I really enjoy your Sea songs, sir. They are very beautiful!"

"Thank ye, mum!" He said, standing up quickly and swiping his hat off before her in big surprise. "Didn't know we had an audience, Mum."

"It's a pity that only the Sea hears your singing!" she said with conviction.

"No mum we're really singing to the whales, dolphins and..." he winked, "to the mermaidens, far below."

And, how this charmed her so!

"It's very wonderful." She choked.

He bowed and then went back to his humble caulking, not knowing the full glory in which he had crafted within her and, indeed, within the very Sea, for then a pod of porpoises had begun to ride the bow waves and Edith could imagine even the Grey Whales could hear these songs reverberate through the deep waters, far beneath.

At the Captain's compartment, she stood before the door and decided to knock and the kid opened the hatch.

"Good morning, Edith." Captain said, arising to greet her. A jolt hit her, he was so electric in his presence!

"Good Morning, sir."

He grabbed her hand and kissed it right off.

"Sir!" she chided, blushing and pulling her hand back. Where was Captain McKinney? Then she saw him behind her and breathed a sigh of relief. "Good morning sir."

"Good morning, Edith. How are ye today?"

"Good, thank you for asking."

"Take a seat, Edith. See, the paper there?"

"Yessir?" She asked, sitting down by it.

"Ye are an English teacher, correct?"

"Yessir."

"Good. I'm hiring ye - I want to improve me English."

She stopped, confused. Was he English or French? Or - was he American born?

"Why would you want to do that?"

His shoulders fell flat: "Didn't yer mother ever teach you that it's rude to question the motives of others!" he snapped. "Just give me some English lessons, Edith!"

"In what exactly, sir?"

"Writing, speech - y' know."

"Yessir." She said still astonished, mouth open.

"I'm not always going to be doing this." He lied.

She just looked at him astounded.

"Ye don't believe me, do ye!"

"Well, sir, you have condemned yourself to this life."

"No I haven't!" *Now he was really mad! NO ONE EVER told him what to do!*

Never! That's why he was out here, forever!!!

"How's that, Captain?"

"Because there is a whole lot of world left out there!" He said wildly swinging his arm wide around to mean the whole world. But, then he gulped and tried to contain his sudden storm of fury. "Okay." He said chiding himself and pushing his hands down.

"But you will always be hunted." She resumed, stupidly.

"Don't say that!" he said, but her words re-ignited his fury but underneath was a terrible chill, as he'd always felt, since that first day that he'd been impressed onboard *The Minster*, some twenty odd years ago, as an ordinary seaman, shoot, as a kid! But, out to Sea he had risen to become a Captain! And, in all that time, he'd seen most of the world's shores and lands at his beck and he shook it off and listened to her hopeless words, no more! The world was too big for curses to follow the many nautical miles 'round the world, wide!

"Just the English lessons, no lectures!" he cried trying to swallow his rage.

"Yessir, but it is a lot of work to learn."

"I'm used to hard work!" He snapped. "We'll start right after chow!"

"Yessir. Well, I'll need some paper and pens..."

"Tell Chandler all that you need..." He looked out the great window, suddenly greatly distracted and she followed his gaze and saw a line of clouds forming due West. As she saw this the ship began a slight change in its heaving as if she had just noticed the gust front, herself. Just then the watch, Oscar, knocked and strode in, come to attention, reporting:

"Sir, wind shift, North West by South East! Possible frontal passage, sir!"

"Thank you, Oscar, good job."

Oscar clicked his heals, sharply and pleased and then spun around and left.

Captain stood up and swiftly followed him up the ladder to brace the sails. She could hear him give orders as the gustfront hit. They wrestled with the winds for two hours, bracing and wearing ship. And then Captain finally came right back down and resumed sitting at the table with her, with his pen, like an eager schoolboy, as if nothing remarkable - like the commanding of his ship through a squal line had just

happened. It was all a bit endearing to her. Of course, that's probably what he was trying to do here - to get her to care for him, so he could get the...

"Let's eat our chow first." He said, getting Chandler to bring the dishes and fetch Captain McKinney, whom he had let relax up on the maindeck once the squall had passed.

During the meal, she thought about how she would structure her lessons, and she actually found herself looking forwards to them. She could at least teach him some better manners as well! It would be a challenge for her.

"May I ask what your skill level is, sir?" she asked once the food was taken away by the kid.

"I have no idea." He shrugged.

"What school grade did you complete?"

"I don't know in English. Me schooling was entirely in French up to age ten." He said rather bitterly. "Then we moved to England, when me step father died."

"Really? You hardly have an accent at all!"

"I know; I worked hard on it."

She just stared at him.

He pushed his plate away, the kid took it away immediately, and he grabbed his pen and ink and sat there, on-the-ready. Captain McKinney moved to the corner and began reading the bible.

"Okay," she pushed her plate to the side, "I need to assess your penmanship, so I shall begin by dictating a few basic things."

Her spectacles fell half way down her nose, as she said this, and he had to bite his tongue to keep from laughing heartily.

"Okay." And he sat there like an eager pupil, ready to write. "First, write your name down, please."

"I know how to write me own name, Edith!"

"Are you the teacher or me?"

"Ye are." He answered back, and the ferocious pirate captain complied and she smiled - in getting her way.

"Belay that smiling Madame!" he snapped. But she snatched up his paper and peered over at the signature, which was in nice, fluid letters: "Daniel La Fourche." She read it out loud. It was a wily, but beautiful name, which meant 'Daniel, the Fork' in French, and it somehow suited him very well.

"We don't pronounce the 'r' in my last name, in French."

"Oh, right, yes, of course."

He tapped his foot impatiently as she studied the signature.

"I'm assessing your best penmanship, Captain... good." And she gave him back the paper. "Let me see, alright, write the word 'cat.'"

And, rolling his eyes for a second, then he dipped the pen and quilled out "Cat" and other simple words: 'Dog, bird, fish...' His words had well formed, even letters; she could see across the table.

"I can write better than that, Madame!"

"Okay, let's try simple sentences." She said. "Write out: 'I can write better than that, Madame.'"

And he wrote and punctuated it out perfectly. "Haven't you seen me write in the log book? I can write, Edith! I just want it to be better."

She peered over. "Okay, good. Let's try a bit harder words: Writing can be rough at times."

And he wrote it down, correctly, except for the words rough he wrote 'ruff' and he wrote 'toymes.'

"Let me see that," and she held the paper, marking the errors. "I see; it is a problem mostly with spelling and pronounciaiton, then?"

"I suppose..." he said, looking at the paper anxiously, like a school boy.

She 'belayed' her smiling again.

"...and probably with grammar and punctuation, too? Okay, well, the first thing to do is to give you a spelling list of twenty of the trickiest English words. You simply write each one out four times, and then I'll quiz you, on their spelling, the next day. On Fridays there will be a retest of a hundred words."

"Make it fourty words per day."

"That's a lot more. It's a two hundred word test on Fridays."

"I'm a fast learner."

"Okay! Then we'll also write paragraphs, letters, and essays. Then we'll do some reading aloud."

"Great! Let's read more romances!" he smiled, teasing again.

"No, sir, I shall have you read aloud from the Bible." She chided, looking over her ugly spectacles, again!

"Okay." He said. And Captain McKinney's eyebrows went up.

She was touched by his genuine eagerness to learn; and so she wrote out a long list of the toughest English words: tough, rough and stuff; ought and not and knot; threw, through, thorough, though and thought; and so on.

It was immediately obvious to him that she was a great teacher and he vowed, to himself, to grasp this great opportunity to learn and he practiced the rest of the evening on them! After scoring perfectly on his quiz the next day, he did some short letter writing, which she scratched out the many punctuation and grammatical errors and made him rewrite five times a piece. Each time he crumpled up the letter and threw it across the space and they formed a little pile, on the sill; until the boy came back from his duty in the galley, and cleaned them up.

"Captain!" she chided. But he was already trying at it again. "Let's don't waste paper!"

"D'accord - yes."

And, later that day Cap'n observed that the boy had been discreetly following all the lessons, over his shoulders, as he was too slowly swabbing the deck behind him.

"Chandler, do you want to learn, too?" he looked up over his shoulder from the table and asked him.

"Yes Sir!" the boy piped, holding the swab at attention!

"Are ye willing to work hard at it?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir!" he almost screemed back.

"Very well, then, Edith, teach the boy as much as he can absorb."

"Yessir." She said.

"Thank you very much, sir!" the boy piped.

Cap'n nodded and pointed to the chair; and the boy got to sit right by the Captain of the ship! She sat across from them, both, and put pen, ink and paper before Chandler. She made him write out his long name, which he could barely do, back then:

"William Henry Chandler" and she had him write his own long name over and over again.

And then she gave the boy got a list to write including: Dog, cat, fox, rat, sox... He scratched his head, bewildered when he saw the list. But Cap'n thumped him with his elbow, and nodded to him an encouraging gesture.

"And, I got through it all!" Exclaimed Shaw, suddenly speaking in first person narration; again, admitting, once again, to being the boy, Chandler, in his long story, and his memories were quite fond:

"It ware a funny soight to sit together, like school boys, by the Captain of the ship - and me! We were chums then, I tell ye, and sometoimes, whoile she read one of her romanace books in the corner, Cap'n jotted me little jokes and doodles - mostly of our bespectacled schoolmarm! And I secretly giggled like a third-grade schoolgirl!!"

"Now, boys," she chided, tapping the book with her pen. "Back to the books."

And Cap'n laughed. "Yes, Ma'am!"

Weeks went by of this, and the boy was soon writing words with more than four letters in them; and he could even read simple books now, for she had even brought children's books with her on her long journies. Cap'n said he didn't have to do *any* work as long as he was readin' or practicing English! Well, except he had to help René, during meals, although the new boy Cole was there. So, he eventually went through everything she had, including the sappy romances! He liked the math problems she gave him the best, for Cap'n had told him, as they set there together 'in school' that he'd need math skills a lot for seamanship and navigation - when he grew up!

"Though she was a stern teacher, that's how I got the skills to become the man that I soon became!" Shaw said. "I continued to study many years after I last saw her. But that was big start of me education! And it was all because of Captain La Fourche!"

Cap'n devoured each lessons that she gave him - something that was supposed to take him a week, like a long essay, would be done in one, all-night session, as he ran the ship through a 'bad patch' of high Seas. Having been decades to Sea, the heaving ship did not seem to slow him down much. He let the boy stay up sometimes

too, and do his lessons. One time they both had finished their long essay assignments when he called for her the next morning. The boy handed her the papers because Cap'n was already back up on deck, though he'd been up all night.

"I never had better students than these!" She exclaimed to Captain McKinney, while reading the essays. "I never had ones more eager to learn." She held up both of the papers to him. "These are much improved!"

"It's their chance to escape this life." Captain replied. "You are doing a very good thing, Edith."

"Thank you, sir." She said, swallowing heavily, deeply touched, for this was the very great satisfaction of her profession!

This study went on for many days as they headed for Savannah without a ship in sight.

But, Captain was a tough student who often cussed when he came across words like 'rough' and threw pens across the air or fought duels with Nico when missing a word on his spelling test. He wanted perfection!

"Why aren't all English words spelled alike?"

"Alike, Captain, Alike."

"Alike! Damnit! Alike! Whoy!"

"Why." She corrected. "That's just English, Captain."

"Don't just tell me that swash, Edith, give me some rhyme or reason to it!"

"There isn't any, really. Not really."

Captain McKinney cleared his throat.

"You have something to add to this, Geoffrey?"

"If Madame Teacher does not mind."

"Don't worry about whether she minds or not, worry about *me* minding!"

"Yessir."

"You're so damned polite!"

"I try to be, sir."

"How did ye ever run your friggin' ship like that?" he snapped; but it was a rhetorical question. "Now, Captain, tell me why English is so messed up."

"Our language changed over the many invasions over the years, including the Normans bringing ashore the French."

"Ah! So you are blaming it on us!" and Cap'n rolled his eyes.

"Well, sir, the language changed immensely after the Norman Invasion of 1066 and he went on to discuss the effects of French, Latin, Anglo Saxon and Old English which all had shaped English, tying separate words together with marked periods of conquest, and he put it all together in a way that finally made sense to the Captain La Fourche.

"Ah! Alas a reason! It makes sense to me now!" he said breathing out a sigh in relief. "Look when I ask for a reason for something, don't just tell me something troite statement like 'That's just English.' Got it!"

"Didn't anybody ever give you any history lessons, Captain?" she countered.

"No!"

"What sort of education did you have, sir?"

"I had the sorriest, most incomplete education you can ever imagine! Most everything I know of my English, writin' n'rithmetic, I taught meself!!"

"You're kidding me!"

"Myself, I mean."

"Ship to south, ahoy!" echoed through the planks in the overhead and the watch rung the bell insistently and the boatswain piped. "All hands! Ship to the South!"

He threw his hands up in the air. "Excuse me!" He said, with great impatience and he stood up and out the door he went pounding, slamming the hatch behind him.

"He taught himself English?" she asked the other Captain.

"Yes."

"I wonder what his story was." She mused.

"He was born with neither a father, nor a name."

"A bastard!" she cried, astounded! It was just like in the chantees sung about him, she thought it was mere name-calling. But they were singing a most awful truth!! "He is a bastard!"

"Yes, Edith." He said kindly.

"So no wonder!"

"Perhaps now you can be a little more understanding about him."

"Yes..." She said in a wonder. "He is a most interesting person indeed!"

"How do you know this Captain McKinney?"

"Why, he told me, himself!"

"He did? He really trusts you, sir!"

"He does and I only confided in you because you need to understand why he is so frustrated at times. He's had a lot foisted onto him."

"I see... to have accomplished all this without a father!"

"And his mother died as well."

"Yes, it is an incredibly amount! Who was his real father?"

"Captain James Merritt-Masterson of the *Seatack*."

"Really! The famous explorer!"

"He *explored* a lot of women as well." Captain McKinney said shaking his head.

"There are others..."

"Who is his mother?"

"Madame Jennie-Marie La Fourche de Calais. She passed him off as her husband's, who was a very short and blonde man. Everyone knew Daniel and his sisters were bastard children of a tall, dark-haired, Scotts-English Sea captain, who crossed the English Channel many times in his early career at Sea."

"Wow!"

Captain La Fourche tread quietly back aft in after several hours, cussing to himself for leaving Captain McKinney and Edith alone all that time! He put his ear to

the hatch and stood listening a several minutes for their talk and he heard nothing at all and he opened but they both sat there quietly reading - and not plotting his overthrow!! It was then he stood there thinking a long time, realizing what he needed were friends like these, whom he could absolutely trust! He would just have to find his pirate comradeships before he made the sack of the treasure island!

He sat down at his chair with all these thoughts flying about in his head.

"A ship, Captain?" Captain McKinney asked politely.

"A whaler." he said distracted, waving them off. He had to go to Savannah! More risk! After his momentous sack of Charleston, he was getting too well-known to go in there. He'd have to think of an alternate way to contact his friend and get supplies...there was no way to sail in and simply moor there, nor could he send in one of crew in with a message! It was so impossible!

"Are you going to go for her, sir?" Edith asked pleasantly enough, for one steeped in disapproval of piracy.

"Huh? Oh, we don't do these..." He said getting out his paper and dipping his pen.

"Oh really, Captain, I'm just curious, why not?" Edith asked.

"That's the Docabrisa. She left Boston two weeks ago, empty."

"How do you know all that, sir?" She asked.

"I wasn't born yesterdey, Edith." He said, arranging his papers.

"But, how did you know?"

"I observed her – shadowed her for two hours. She wasn't our type."

"Interesting." She smiled.

"Not heavy enough in the water." Captain McKinney said, looking up from Proverbs 31.

"Back to English, Edith." He said tapping the back of the pen to the table impatiently.

A week went by pleasantly of this diligent work, interspersed with Cap'n's heavy bouts of pacing, when they tailed a ship heavily. And then he was back to the English lessons, during which he often teased Edith relentlessly, about everything 'proper.'

She also gave him long passages in her bible to read out loud, that the other Captain read, and he struggled through the very formal English within it. And it was quite a mouthful for the dark pirate captain to be reading - the Psalms and Ecclesiastes - but he did, he really did! And, as the days went by, he spoke less of the rather wild, Gaelic Sea-talk all about them onboard, and more of that of Captain McKinney, or, say, his real father's upperclass English, from the Bristol Yards. And this made the teacher secretly wonder if Cap'n dueled, inside his head, with his father, who'd left him, as a child, in France.

Edith and The Captain Duel

"Okay, Captain, let's work on our reading skills. Please turn to Ezekial..."

"Oh, let's just read some more romances!"

"Are you the teacher, or me?"

"School's out now." He grinned.

"No it's not, we still have one more lesson to cover."

"The Principle - me - says its' time for recess!"

"Hummmph!"

"Where can we get more of these romance books, Edith; I like them much!"

"Captain, these books are for ladies." She said, once again.

"I know, but who would know they're so much *fun* to men!"

"Why do you find them so much fun!" she scowled.

"Because I get to be the very devil in them!"

"That's not funny." She declared, injured.

"It is! Cuz when ye disapprove of me your face turns bright red and your nose goes straight up into the air!"

She pouted. Her nose went into the air.

"...like it's doing right now!" he laughed, pointing to her nose. "There it goes! Yer nose goes straight into the air!"

"Well, I declare!" she cried.

"I deeee-claaaare!" he mocked back in falsetto.

"..."

"Well, let's discuss the impropriety when Sir Charles ravishes her by the lake side, for ye can use it as an example on how to teach me good, genteel manners, Madame."

"Why should I teach you good manners, Captain, when you don't really want to learn!"

"Oh, come now, Edith, who says I don't want to learn."

"You just want to have fun at my expense!"

"Yes." He grinned, "But ye could teach me a thing or two about chivalry."

"Okay! How about letting your captives go free, that would be a *chivalrous* thing to do, Captain La Fourche!"

"Nope."

"See! You don't want to learn!!"

"Back to Sir Charles, Edith, it's your book, did ye enjoy reading about him ravishing poor Louisa under the moooooooon-light, by the lake."

"I don't know." She retreated into grading Chandler's latest cat-scratch of an essay and looked down to the paper on the table.

"Teeeeee-cheeeeeerrrrr..." he said leaning way across the table to peer into her downward looking eyes, from six inches away.

Captain McKinney forced his mouth to remain neutral, though his muscles hurt to keep a straight face in this delightful battle of the wits.

"Yes?"

"I asked ye a question, *Teeeeee-cher.*"

"And I answered it."

"No ye didn't."

"I said that I did not know."

"Madame," and he grabbed the book in question "Observe how well worn these certain pages are." He flipped right to the section, holding it up, smiling broadly. "This is the section with the impropriety in it, see? The other pages are in better condition, so can ye tell me how only these here pages got so worn out, if ye are not so interested in reading them?"

She turned bright red, for it was the very passage where Sir Charles smooched the young Louisa under the moonlight! She looked over and saw it and her face flushed! Oh, how she hated that he had read every book of hers twice and even had them each memorized, line by line! It was excruciating!

"You're blushing, *Teach.*"

"Well, I'll be!"

"I'll be...!" he mocked back.

"Can't you just leave me alone!?"

"Nope."

"Ahhhhhhh!"

She turned to Captain McKinney for help but Cap'n La Fourche wagged two fingers between them for her to stop. "Avast the looking! I may be yer student, but I'm still the boss here - got it?"

"Yessir." She said, turning back to him, injured.

"Back to Sir Charles..."

"AAAAAAAaaaaah!" she cried as he laughed at her, in delight!

And! And it was such fun to him, for whenever he pushed her over the edge like she resounded with lady-like grace and pouting and it was a cat-and-mouse game with him, that he relished with great zeel and fun!

If he would have been more honest with himself, that, despite her 'old-maidish' attire and her complete lack of status, it was the most delight he'd ever had with a lady! It was this way because she never let him get away with a thing! Most of the proper females he had met (other than the great numbers of whores out there) had capitulated once they had come across his great looks and charisma, and the fact that he was a captain of his own ship and had a fortune at his beck! But, no, not Edith! Nothing moved her from her uppity position of piety! And so, he never had a weepy winch to contend with thereafter! For there never was an 'after' with her, because she never let him get away with a darn thing and it was the first time ever in his life! And, so he 'played' the game over and over again, to his endless delight. Only she didn't get understand it as a zestful game, and that was the very fact made it even more fun!

"This is better'n rum, Captain McKinney!" he'd said, once, who'd laughed back helplessly as he witnessed duels of wit everyday.

Only she didn't understand that it was such a game to him, for she was always as serious, as he was full of 'deviltry' or mischief. Even Captain McKinney, and by now, the long time chaperone and referee of these matches had soon given up into helpless bouts of laughter as Cap'n pursued her every qualm!

"I'm sorry, Edith!" Captain McKinney cried, his hand over his face, trying to conceal his laughter, with propriety. If Captain La Fourche had been an ounce disrespectful, he would have taken up for her, but, somehow, with every 'battle' there was never any real injury or disrespect, and, he had to admit, it was comedy, all morning long sometimes, and he usually ended in helpless laughter, as well. "I'm sorry Ms. Edith!!" he said, holding his stomach.

And Cap'n was laughing, because even stuffy ol' Captain McKinney, the bastion of all things 'proper' had found Edith, old maidish and funny. Her complete lack of a sense of humor, made it even funnier and had confounded the goodly Captain to keep a straight face. This was great sport to him, as well, to make 'the old man' laugh as well!

"Well, I'll be darned! You're being just as absurd as him!" she cried, outraged.

Captain McKinney turned crimson, and tried to read the Bible - Lamentations - but, soon, he was just laughing helplessly again.

"You're not being a very good gentleman, Captain McKinney!" she declared.

"I apologize, Madame!" He said, but he was red in the face from laughter as well.

The Inca Gold – Robbing from the Robbers

Finally a day he was serious with her, during lessons, they somehow got on the subject of Queen Elizabeth and her various consorts, including, the immanent Sir Francis Drake. “Ah! A man after me own heart!” he said, rocking back in his chair and kicking up his heals on the struts table.

She looked down at his feet and his manners and he just gleamed back to her.

“My own heart.” She corrected his English.

“A man after my own heart.” He said slowly, relishing every word, to her sheer annoyance.

“Correct.” She said to the grammar correction as well as to the allegation.

“He’s what really started all this business that you call piracy.”

“If you can call attacking ships a legitimate business!”

“I can, indeed.” He said, smiling, flippant.

“Okay.” She said tight-lipped and shut the book.

“Now, come on, Edith, speak your mind on this. We shall have a debate.”

“He was a murdering pirate.”

“He was a defender of England and a privateer, given letters of marque by the crown of England, Queen Elizabeth.”

“So because a queen gives you permission, it’s okay to attack a ship?”

“Yes, and only the ships of our foes.”

“So, where are your letters of marque?” she snapped.

“I don’t have any – any more.”

“So what does that make you, then, sir?”

“A business man, now.” He laughed.

“Does a business men attack merchant ships?”

“No, generally I don’t do these by choice, Edith. I try only to go for the Spanish Treasure Ships coming from Porta Bello, loaded with gold.”

“And that makes it alright?”

“They are enemies of England, and will use their fortune to send Armadas of ships to our shores as they did in 1588, and so on.”

“That was more than a hundred years ago. How do you know that’s what the Spanish use their gold for now? Maybe they’re feeding their poor?”

“Nonsense! And by the way, they’re the ones who are robbing – from the Incan Empire.”

“So piracy is alright because it’s robbing from the robbers?”

“That’s exactly right! And it keeps them from lording it over England.”

“Since when do you care about England?”

“Well, I’m half English, Edith.”

“Everyone says that you’re French.”

“I’m both.”

"Really?" she was both shocked and intrigued, back then it was very as shocking to be of 'mixed' blood like this! She'd known this already, but for him to admit to it freely was still very confounding!

"Where did you live the most?" she asked, engaged.

"Both of them just about equally."

"If you had to choose between them, which country would you choose?"

He thought about that one, with eyes closed:

"I wouldn't. I'd just sail off to America, *The New World*."

"So why don't you go there now?"

He sighed and then he shrugged; who knew why the Captain stayed out here, in haunted Seas, never returning to land, for good.

"Don't you miss land, Captain? I certainly do. Do you know that I've been to Sea two years now!"

"Oh, yes, I go ashore to careen the ship on the beach and to resupply."

"I mean, to visit and relax away from the Sea."

"I can't anymore." He sighed. For once he wasn't teasing her relentlessly and it got her attention. She sat up straight in her chair, peering at him intently.

For a second she suddenly felt very sad for him, for once, and she said: "It must feel like an exile out here." She said and he nodded.

And then he was remembering a time a few years back:

"But there was once a time I did come ashore, that's because when we pulled into Norfolk, I saw one ship - one that I just had to catch up with and look *that* man in the eye, for the first time in me life, as a man - that was the ship of me 'father' - *The Sidewinder*."

"Really?" she asked interested and leaning forwards. For the first time in weeks he wasn't been flippant and teasing her. She was interested. He was actually talking about himself.

"A good name for that man's ship." He said without apparent bitterness. "A snake."

"...and?"

"Well, I had me crew switch flags and put on 'Le Derriere' (The Butt) on the stern and we went into port and moored. After starboard crew went on liberty, I went into the town all by meself - myself, I mean - and I went into twenty pubs until I found him."

"Well?" she said, engaged and intrigued.

"Can you imagine my shock to find such a weak, old man before me?"

"You didn't know his age?"

"No, I did not." He said shaking his head. "I didn't even know that!" He looked sad. He was suddenly a very real person to her, one with sorrows and sadnesses like all the rest.

"What was he like?" What was a man like that had fathered such a man as Captain La Fourche. What was he like?

"He was old, weak. He was not the powerful brutish man I remembered as a kid."

She was shocked. "Did he recognize you right off?"

"I think he did!" He shook his head in regret. "But, we talked a long time, before he would admit to it! I remembered I was waiting for him to catch a glimmer of interest, or, perchance to mention his rather infamous son, after I inquired all about his family. He told me all about my half brother and sister. But no, nothing about me, or my sisters. We had never even been a glimmer in the old man's eye."

"Surely no!" she said, catching her voice.

"It was hard to sit there and hear about how well my half brother was doing - running a great sugar cane plantation on Santee Island off Caracas. I just sat there and gulped like fish a few times - it was a most bitter scene that I had just cast myself into! I really should have known better..."

She was touched by his story and she gulped heartfully too.

"But in the end, after a few rounds, we got to talking of pirates - I led the conversation there, you see, and he finally mumbles something like 'Aren't you the canniness of that French Pirate.'"

"I said: 'I've been told that before.'"

"I've been told that he was my son." He lets out at last, triumphant, yet still pretending to not know who I was. Somehow, I had known all along that he knew who I was and was just toying with me all evening."

"You never looked into it?"

"He never came to me." He lied.

"I swallowed very hard remembering the very day that his firm had sent my mother, my aunt and I away when we had come from France to find him in Bristol. I was age ten. Then I came up to him on the street the next day and he wouldn't talk to me. Another time, I went to his house because we were desparately poor and they had had the police throw us out on the street. Then I had written him letters. We were most desparately poor and had no food nor shelter."

She shook her head. A heaping platter of injustice had been served to him! So no wonder he had become a pirate!

"It was as if it were all my fault for being born his bastard son!"

She gasped at his out-right admission!

"Right after that I was impressed into the Sea by the very man who is now captain of *The Vantage!* Captain Jenkins! Ironic, isn't it?"

"Oh!" she cried. This man was Captain's mortal foe.

"Jenkins can condone kidnapping, but, somehow, not piracy! It's a double standard!"

"Goodness!" she exclaimed.

"Jenkins was ship's Master-at-Arms on *The Minster*, back then."

"What a tyrant!"

"Back to me father - my father - all's he could say for himself was this: "My son never came to me. I don't know what happened to him." He had lied and this had made him seem even more weak!"

"He did come to you." I told him.

And I see a 'shock' in his eyes then – pure acting. He 'suddenly' remembered all too well what he had done - He had forsaken me."

She swallowed heavily.

"He did come to you a long time ago and he is coming to you now."

"Daniel?"

"But it was too late, he'd never lifted a finger when I had written him - terribly constructed letters in English - about me Mother's death."

"Maybe he never got the letters?"

"I guess not." He said without bitterness.

"Is it really you?" he says now, quite interested, but, I had already lost a great deal of interest in him."

He shrugged his shoulders, and that was the end of the tale for Captain La Fourche. But Edith was left hanging. "What happened after that?"

"I left him standing there, in the pub."

"Surely, no!"

"Yes." He said solemnly.

"Did he want you back as his son?"

"Oh, yes, once he admitted it he said 'fluff' like that, how he longed to meet me and how I had become a big hero when the Spanish were decimating our fleet. It was all fluff."

"Fluff?" she asked, stunned. "What do you mean by that?"

"Fluff is what people say to you when they know you have a bouillon of gold in the hold of your ship."

"Surely, you didn't give him a chance to know you."

"Probably not." He sighed.

"Why not?"

"Because I've become me own master now." He said, now fiddling restlessly with the compass again, and probably wanting to get back to his navigation tasks. "...my own master now."

"You just walked away?" she inquired. Surely there was more to the story than this.

"No, he was saying stuff like: "Oh! My son!" and, "I am so proud of you!" and how he wanted to stay with me, now that he was old; how he could get me a Royal pardon for my self and my ship or move to his house the New World, etc. I didn't give it all much thought."

"It's sad." She said. It was a most bitter tale. She swallowed heavily.

"I know."

"You have become greater than I and so completely on your own!" he had told me. "Look at you! You are my fine, handsome son! Your brother is not half the man you are. I want you in my life!"

"Surely that was good to hear."

"Fluff." He said, but she wasn't so sure.

"And...?"

"I stood up then and left him there."

As he recalled this he recounted the generosity of his stepfather - to have raised a son that wasn't even his – this man had been his real father! But his stepfather had died at age ten, leaving them all stricken in poverty.

"Oh..." she said, sad.

"I'm not sure why I told you this story..." he said, now quite annoyed with himself for allowing this breach of his personal armor!

"You wanted someone to understand who you are and why."

"Yes, I guess..." he said, far away for he was acutely remembering that the old man had been crying when he had left him there, for it had all been too, too late. But he had bested his own father, though he hadn't known it until the day that he had met him there. And the day you are stronger than your father, is a day to carry heavy on your heart.

And then he had gone and become the reigning prince of the Seas, ferocious and unbowed to legacies of fallible fathers.

The Duck

"Land -- Ho!" hailed the watch at sunrise; ringing the bell.

"Savannah River - at two points, Cap'n!" Faerburne called down.

"Aye." Cap'n and looked into the glass at the estuary and there was the river's well-known, jungly meander.

"Aye, Mr. Faerburne, we'll drop the hook at one mile out."

"Aye-Aye, sir."

Finally the mainland, after many days at Sea! But they didn't dare go ashore! The crew, though, rushed to the gunwhale anyways.

"Ah, there she be!" one cried.

"I wonder if me goirl be still there."

"I miss her, Savannah, m'lady!"

"Take a good look at her, cuz that's all ye er gonna git of her!" said Cindahr, most viciously.

"Shut up!" and Bilbow hit the third mate in the jaw and a big fight broke out on deck. Gunner Meade and Mortensen came, armed and stopped all the fighting and sent both of the men below.

After they set the anchor rode and stowed all the sails, Cap'n obliged them some rum to wash the wait down. Originally he had hoped for bumboats to come out to sell them items, and he could send word to his friend through them. But that would expose his friend to such danger. After a while, he finally figured out how to contact his friend in Savannah without actually going ashore and exposing his ship to great treachery: He simply ordered an anchoring off the mouth of the Savannah River, near Tybee Island and, then he hoisted the Jolly Roger. He would let rumor do the rest! Surely, word would spread quickly back into Savannah, where Luc said he would be staying, at the house of his mistress, Madame Marie Dubois. They just had to be patient now and await for Luc to get word, load up his ship and come away from shore! It might take a while!

Ah! What if Luc were detained? And! Anything could detain him - floods, fires, disease...ah, the list was endless! Yet, he greatly trusted his friend, who always had come through in the past. Luc had a solid, quiet commanding presence and a most capable quality about him; while Daniel had all the ideas, charisma and boldness! They made a good team, and that was good, for, he could feel his enemies - on board as well as ashore, or in the Royal Navy, were converging all around him and that's why he didn't dare go ashore! He would not let his guard down, no, never! Not until they got to their own "New World" as Luc had nicknamed "La Tierre."

The crew could sense the tension of the circumstances, as well and René told them "Look, be patient, Captain has something beeg up hee's sleaves."

Captain had been pacing the deck, as they waited there, a whole week, without any real comment from him. He studied every single vessel that came out and he paced. He found it hard to study, so he suspended it, but strictly ordered the boy to keep going.

"Well, he should discuss this with us!" garbled out Lateen.
 "He supposed to include us in his plans! Eet's in the rooles" said Marlesh.
 O'Shea muttered "...instead of spending all that time with that wench!"
 "...and that Goody-goody Captain McKinney!"

"Oh I hate them!"
 "Well, you can just stow that!"

Another fight almost broke out, but the First Mate whispered to them "Come beneath, mates, into me office, now." And they smiled, they could drink with the First Mate the rest of the day away now! Party time!

A day later, O'Shea finally went up to the Captain, who was studying a vessel coming out of the estuary, while muttering to himself. "Where is that bastard! He *said* he would be ready after Easter!"

"Captain, the crew is getting irritable..."
 "I know." He said, while intently studying a schooner. "Give them more rum."
 "You know sir, idle hands, sir, moike t' devil's werk."
 "Aye, Mr. O'Shea." And he collapsed the scope decisively.

"Can I tell them anything – anything - to *soothe* them, sir? Playse!"
 And then he turned to O'Shea. "You can tell them that we are bird watching."

"Bird watching!"

"For a certain species of bird, a Mallard."

"Sir!" *I cuss the day I met ye!*

"A lot of ships are looking for this treasure, O'Shea. We need company."

"Aye, Cap'n..."

"A lot of Royal Navy ships are looking for the treasure."

"Ah! You're looking fer *The Duck*, sir!"

"That's right, *The Duck!*" And then he turned and shouted across the deck "A bottle of me best, for the first to sight *The Duck!*"

"A bottle o'the best to ye whom fust soights *The Duck!*" echoed up across the deck and up the masts, to the yardarms. "Cap'n says a bottle!" High, aloft the order went, back aft to the mizzenmast "...Cap'n says!" "Oh, aye, that's roight mates, a bottle!"

"Whose *The Duck*, Mr. René?" One deckhand asked the cook.

"Ah! They arrr our comrades!"

"The Duck?"

"Ah, tis a joke, m' boy! It's a ship actually named '*Le Duc*' - French for "The Duke", but none of ye can parlez Francais so, she's simply known as '*The Duck!*'"

"Quack, quack!"

"Aye! You got it!" the jolly cook laughed.

Two long, hot, mutinous days later the watch, Mitchell, screamed, "Bull's eye!
 There she ware! Ship to South!"

"Tis a schooner, sir!"

Pinky cried from top of the Mains'le, "She's sailing right out of the River! Comin' roight for ooosss!"

The languid, irritable crew sprung into motion and Faerburne piped for the Captain.

Chandler proffered Cap'n his top hat and coat, as he sprung from his chair and Cap'n marched through the companionway, up the ladder. On deck, The Second Mate put the spyglass into his hands.

"Make sail!" He ordered. And all flew about the masts. "Hoist anchor, quickly."

The maindeck was as quiet as a library, for a half an hour, as Cap'n studied and studied; and pondered her. The ship, too, boldly held her course – South by South West – and didn't flinch a bit as Captain La Fourche drove *The Cyclone* upon the wind! Now the crew grew very excited as they chased her swarming up the masts to set more sails. And soon they were flying ahead of *The Duck*, and then beginning to out flank her: 'turning-to' and showing '*The Bird*' her cannons, jutting out all along her sides!

"Set course 1-9-0 and furl the main!" He commanded, while still at his glass. He took off his top hat and without taking his eyes off his 'prey', for one second, and he began to sweat in the sun, and was unbuttoning his outer coat, never stopping his watch. Chandler grabbed it from him quietly. "Thanks." Cap'n said quietly, whose good manners always surprised the boy in such a fierce man, who was at battle.

"That's what makes the Captain so good." René came up behind Chandler seeing the boy's rapt interest in the actions of Captain La Fourche. "He stalks them."

"Yes."

"Hey, Chauncy!" Captain called. "Git Freddie up here!"

"Aye, Sir!"

"With his drum!"

"Aye, Captain! Freddie, report to Quarterdeck - with yer drum!"

"Aye, Captain!" Freddie called from the foremast, came down the stays, like a monkey and flew down the ladder to the foc'sle. Thirty seconds later he ran up to Cap'n on quarterdeck with his Arabian Dumbeck. This all would have been comical hadn't they been in such hot pursuit.

"Hear it?!" Captain cried.

Freddie cocked his ear. "Oh! Aye, Cap'n!"

"Answer their call!" Cap'n ordered.

"Aye!" and Freddie listened intently.

Most of crew could not hear it at first, but Cap'n grabbed the helm and he cut swiftly upon the wind; and the other ship began to turn towards them as well! And then they heard a distinct five beat pattern:

"Dunk -- Dunk -- Dunk- Dee-Dunk!!"

"Dunk -- Dunk -- Dunk- Dee-Dunk!!"

"Dunk -- Dunk -- Dunk- Dee-Dunk!!"

"Chandler get out me hanky!"

"Yer hanky sir?"

He pointed to Cindahr, who grabbed the helm and he tossed the glass into O'Shea's arms and ran down the ladder and came back up with a red satin bed sheet with rivets in it for flying and her handed it to Briscoe: "Run this up the mizzenmast!"

It was such a shiny, bright, decadent red that the whole crew burst out in laughter. Not five minutes later the other ship unfurled a red satin sheet, as well!

"Hurray! Hurray!" the entire crew cheered and they were embracing each other and dancing on the deck, for it was very sweet moment to have their friends back!

Captain turned to the boy winking: "They're a set of sheets stolen from a certain favorite Mistress of Savannah!"

"Yessir!" he smiled.

"Thar's a story behind that one. I should tell it to ye, one day, bo-woy, when you're old enough!" Cap'n says, laughing.

He took the helm back from Cindahr and nosed the ship over.

"It's Cap'n Janvier!" cried Faerburne.

"Oye requires the Cap'n's Best!" Cried Mitchell from the main mast.

Cap'n said, "Aye! René, get 'em it."

"Aye, sir."

And they all cried out while bustling around the deck, shouting:

"The Duck is back! Quack-quack!"

And they began dancing around, while stomping the deck.

"The Duck is back! Quack-quack!"

"Ah! *The Duck!*" cried Mincer. "Thar'll be a big feast - just like last time!!"

"René, slaughter me a lamb, or two!" The First Mate ordered.

"Aye! Mr. O'Shea!"

"Come on boy!" René grabbed Chandler. "I need help."

"Cindahr," Cap'n called from the helm, "Make sure the two prisoners have no contact with our guests." Cap'n ordered and Cindahr went to go put a key in their doors. "No one is to tell them *anything!*" Captain said to Chandler leaning over: "And that means you too, Chandler!"

"Aye, Captain!" the boy piped back, as sharply as he could.

And René assured him "I'll busy him in the galley, Cap'n."

"Good." Captain said, buttoning up his overcoat up to his chin and smoothing back his thick, black hair, as he held the helm with his other hand.

From the galley, the boy could watch the other ship flanking magnificently towards them.

After such violence with every ship they'd ever meet, to come upon another ship peacefully, at full sail, was a breath-taking event! How marvelous she was! How full of grace, and of...he was at a loss of words to describe it...of majesty!

Soon, the two ships sailed alongsides, at a mast's length a part, flying gorgeously by each other, neither captain reefing sails a bit! They raced to the head point of Savannah Bay and almost out into the ocean and the two captains shouted

out delightful taunts to each other and the two crews boasted and jested to each other ‘tween ships. And Captain leaned *The Cyclone* into *The Duck*!

“Got ye, ye Bastard!” he cried over to Captain Janvier and *The Cyclone*’s crew stomped in delight as he leaned her into *The Duck*. “Flap back you, *Duck*!”

“Got you Daniel!” the other captain called back as he elegantly trimmed his ship towards *The Cyclone*. They raced a spars length apart now, which was a very dangerous thing to do and though it was done in the spirit of fun and comradeship, they did actually have to sail close in, to moor both ships together in the bay.

Finally, Cap’n pulled off his top hat and extravagantly gestured for Captain Janvier to come aboard; ordering all sails reefed and spars braced back. They performed all these task with great enthusiasm and, though it was a lot of work, it went very quickly. And *The Duck* did the same thing. And they both ordered dropped hooks. And both ships coasted slowly alongsides, as if they both knew what to do. They seemed happy to see each other too.

Like a mooring party a’shore, the boatswains threw the monkey fists over, which were made from light lines and then they heaved across the heavy mooring lines, cinching the ships together. The boatswain’s mates placed long fenders ‘tween ships and then lashed the two gunwhales together, and finally placing a long, thick plank over ‘tweenships, for the brow.

After that, two lines of pirates then mustered on boths sides of the brow and Cap’n LaFourche ordered the boatswain: “Pipe them aboard!”

At the piping, Captain Janvier came across, stopped amid the brow, saluting the French Ensign flying at the stern, and then he walked through the two lines of crewmen and came up Captain La Fourche and saluted him, as well. One could tell that these two captains had been Royal Navy men.

“Ah, Daniel!”

He returned the salute:

“Luc, you bastard!”

And they threw their arms around each other and everyone applauded, yelled and stamped.

He was a man of their own heart and the crew of *The Cyclone* loudly cheered and stamped his arrival:

“Captain of *The Duck*!” Stamp! Stamp!

“The Captain of *The Duck*!” Stamp!

Then the two first mates - O’Shea and Robinette - embraced the same way, and, then the two Second Mates mates, and so on. Soon they were bringing out bottles of wine and kegs of rum on deck. And Chauncy was tuning up his fiddle to Chips.

Then Captain Janvier, held up his hand then piped “All hands, resupply ship!”

“Deckhands, form a line!” Robinette ordered and a long line of men formed all the way from *The Duck*’s hold to the brow and O’Shea ordered another line of men from the brow to *The Cyclone*’s hold, and with many hands, they hand-hauled a large amount of cargo across the gunwhales such as: water, flour, limes, jams, hens in

cages, cream, and one fat, squeeling hog in a huge wooden crate. It was an unexpected and wonderful act of friendship between the two captains!

"Damn!" is all Cap'n could say, to his friend, watching all this generosity with an incredulous smile, for it was a treasure full of treats! "They just don't make friends like you anymore!"

"Thought you could use a few supplies." Captain Janvier replied back with a sly smile. "It took me two days to gather and load all these things. I apologize, but I thought you might need some things."

"Luc, I think I should pay you back..."

"You can - one day, my friend, when we're better off."

"...in Gold!" Cap'n said, back, with his wild smile.

"Got any?"

Cap'n La Fourche winked. "We'll talk about that later, tonight, Luc."

"Oh, really?"

"Oui, mon brere!"

And then they started the huge feast, as the sun went down over the Savannah Bay.

Captain Janvier

The two ship masters sat contentedly like kings, at court, on their armchair thrones upon the poop deck, overlooking their wild, dancing crews on the main deck beneath. They talked to each other, in French, with a great friendliness and delight, to see each other, after so many months, alone, in a vast ocean world - so set apart from the comforts of any kind of friendship! They spoke of the many past escapades on board *The Minster* almost twenty years ago and the many adventures, hence.

As Captain Janvier drank with Captain La Fourche, the boy found himself staring at him all the time; for, unlike their dark haired master, Cap'n Janvier had fair hair and stout features. Along with the uncontrived manners of a well-bred gentleman, he managed to radiate an aura of command of the same cocksureness of their own captain. He had a much stronger French accent and he probably was several years older, for he had a calm about him of a man at the very top of his trade, who didn't need to enforce or fight for everything that he wanted; he was that sure of himself. The boy had a feeling that his crew must have had strong respect for him, for he was so calm and at ease at his 'throne' up there. And the boy just stared when he should've been pouring drinks and giving out treats, made by the cook.

"Chandler, keep the captains' cups full." René nudged him, as he stood there, open-mouthed, like a statue.

"What's up with the steward, Daniel, he's always staring." Captain Janvier complained in English, annoyed.

"That's just Chandler. Don't mind him much, Luc." Cap'n told him. "He's observative and rather sharp, I'm training him up to be one of me mates, someday."

"And that's how I knew of me own Captain's interest in me!" Shaw spoke, in a hush and he swallowed hard.

"Really?"

"HE's the one who found the treasure map!"

Captain Janvier turned to me, now impressed, with wide open blue eyes, and nodding to me: "Well, well!!"

"And I, the boy, blushed crimson at all this! Despite all the lessons and generosity, I had no idea that the Cap'n did favor me so!"

"He saw it deep wedged in her bosom!"

And, how they laughed!

"No one in the world would ever think of looking for it in thar!"

"It's a minefield!"

"Aye, it tis! Toujours les femmes!"

"HA! HA! HA!" and they toasted the ladies.

Shaw swallowed a gulp of rum, for a moment, overcome by the memory of his captain's generosity towards him: "I stood thar blinking, as they joked about Madame Edith, then, I excused meself a moment, "Excuse me, sirs." I could hear them laughing warmly at me, as I walked away to the very stern and spared m'self a moment to watch the deep red of the sunset glow all around us. I now had something I'd never

had before, a future! I had always thought I'd be a downcast and poor seaman, like all the others, because I was an uneducated orphan. I never reckoned to have anything, nor be anything other than a poor seaman, like Lateen, growing old and rotting onboardship, out to Sea - ever! With the English and Seamanship lessons, of course, Captain was a'prepping me to be an officer one day! Somehow, I had had no idea! I was so overcome with gratitude that I rubbed water from me young eyes at the stern!"

"Back to me story!" Shaw said, gulping.

"Most of both ships company were wretchedly drunken and dancing jigs on the maindeck. And the crews visited each other's ships, comparing notes and telling tales. It ware kind of like a big open-house, or show-and-tell. I enjoyed meself quite a bit. Jean Michelle a cabin boy about me age was me tour guide. I was a chance to see things from his viewpoint, and not feel so alone upon the world of waters, all around! I learned a lot as I toured *The Duck* with him. He was astonished to hear of my schooling onboardship."

"Back to the story at hand and the boy..." said Shaw reverted back to his third-person case. "Just about all hands were completely drunk when the kid saw that both captains went quietly below."

"Completely transfixed by his captain's words, the boy began to lose interest in all the revelry. He waited and waited and finally decided to bring the two captains more snacks and loaded up a tray in the galley, despite René pleading him not to. He came in the great room to find them standing, over the chart table with their compasses and rulers, quietly plotting out something in French, in very great detail. There were maps of The Gulf of Mexico, The Caribbean and, maybe, Louisiana. Were they secretly coordinating their next hit? He could not tell.

Captain La Fourche looked up in sharp surprise as the boy entered and set down the biscuits on the side table.

"Who told ye to come in here, bo-woy!" Cap'n snapped and stood straight up.

"I..." Chandler stumbled and blurted out the truth "I came on me own..." he was so taken aback! Had he not heard the words earlier of...

"Ye did! Are ye a spy then, or just damn nosey!"

"I – I..." he stuttered. Captain had never once treated him savagely and he turned to Captain Janvier, rather bewildered.

"Just a minute, Luc." Captain La Fourche put down his compass and strode up to the young kid by the hatch.

Suddenly, with a nary a premonition of warning, Captain La Fourche swished out his fencing sword, from the rib of the ship, and the young boy now looked into the sword point of Captain La Fourche once again! He menaced the boy, pushing the sword into his cheek bone until the boy backed up.

"Who do you belong to, bo-woy, to me - or to him!?" and he backed the boy up to the hatch.

"Sir?" he said, trembling with an onslaught so unexpected that he did not know how to answer him and just shook against the hatch!

But, Captain Janvier came up to Cap'n La Fourche's side, translating this attack:

"Boy, will ye follow him, or, yer old Captain? Q'ui s'appelle, Daniel?"

"Captain Geoffry McKinney!" Cap'n La Fourche said fiercely, still menacing Chandler with the swordpoint in his cheek and the fire was alight in his black eyes! "Nor O'Shea!" he cried.

"Oh, aye! I follow Ye, SIR!!" the boy cried, terribly shaken. And, in an instant, he had flicked my cheek, too and I now had an 'X' marked across me left cheek!" Shaw said.

Captain La Fourche smiled that dazzling smile that had led men to attack strongholds or forts and ports and ships and the Royal Navy to boot; and I was a'falling on into that life, called piracy - and Cap'n leaned forwards, pronouncing savagely:

"You now belong to me!"

"Aye, Captain!" The boy cried, terrified and began to shake in his boots!

Cap'n lowered his fencer down and pulled out his hanky from his chest pocket, pressing firmly it to me cheek, and he smiled down at me once again. "Sorry, kid, but, every crewman has to be initiated."

"And I understood, then, what had happened to me!" Shaw said. "Aye." I hoarsely whispered me reply.

"I'll have the cook tend to ye, Chandler." I took a hold of the hankerchief, pressing it to my cheek, while he went to the bell and rang for the cook.

He tossed his fencer onto the chart table, where it clanked and swiveled over the big treasure map, which he then quickly rolled up and stowed in a locked drawer. Then he handed me his own tankard and turned and poured Captain Janvier. And then together they toasted the newest crewmember – me!"

"To Midshipman Chandler!" Cap'n La Fourche cried "May he have many a following Sea at his beck!"

And the other Captain turned to me and said: "That'll be a portion of the treasure, too, bow-oy!" He smiled wildly like our Daniel almost singing this terrible chantee that'd echo all the rest of me life henceforth:

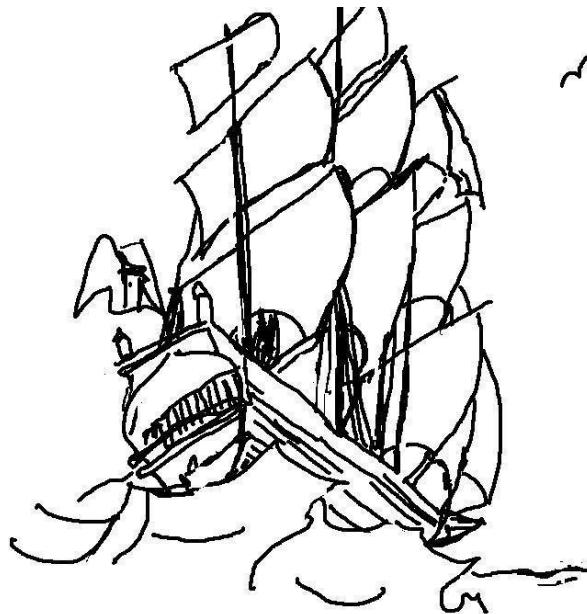
*"A life
Of rubies and of Golde,
From the fathoms deep
And lands, untold!"*

Clanging tankards together, they toasted:

"To the Death, then! Le Morte!"

*And, God have mercy on me,
That's how I fell into
A life - called piracy!*

One of us...[Chandler joins them]



As René came and put a dressing on me cheek, Cap'n stowed the other charts and then had René fetch the First Mate, who came in red-faced and puffing.

"Yessir?"

"Welcome our newest crewmember, Mr. O'Shea." And he pointed to me.

"Aye, sir!" Mister O'Shea cried seeing me bandaged up there. He came over and shook me hand heartily. I found he seemed to be delighted with me, too! I was surprised at this.

"I want him to learn everything about seamanship, navigation, etcetera. He's our new 'midshipman' now, Marcus."

"Aye-Aye, Cap'n!" O'Shea smiled at me.

Cap'n gestered for us all to sit down at his table and sent for Robinette, the other First Mate of *The Duck*. Cap'n brought down a bottle 'Of me finest aisle, from Jamaica.' And he poured us all a drink. I sat with them - the top men of both ships! He toasted: "To when I was thur-teen!"

"Aye, Cap'n, to thur-teeen!"

And each one of them regaled the boy tales of their first days at Sea; how fond they were of them, how harsh they had been and, just how well I was being treated. They told me story after story, tale after tale, yarn after yarn, which all translated this heavy life to Sea, into one finer, of the journey, of the travail of the soul: from boy to

man, from land lubber to sailor and, alas, from a mere mortal to a lover of the decadent blue ocean world that ever surrounded us and haunted us, and to be hailed *Of the oceanworld all about!* He had become *One of them!*

After a while, the dancing grew louder on the main deck and the mates departed and Cap'n said "Go topsides Chandler, and celebrate with the crew!"

"Aye, sir! Thank you so much!"

"Oh, shoot, Luc, now I need a new steward!" he told the Captain Janvier, asides. "But, go on!" Cap'n said and I shook his hand.

The boy floated up to the main deck, so unused to the strong drink. But even through the haze of the booze, it was clear to him that whatever he was doing with his life; he was doing it right!

"Here, bo-woy!" said the First Mate from the Quarter deck, holding up the logbook and pointing to a line and had him write on it: "Midshipman '*Riggins'* Chandler." Thanks to Edith, he wrote it nice and well, even though he was 'qoyte innoculated.'

"Yessir? What's that for?" he slurred, giving him back the logbook.

"Your share of the treasure, kid." The First Mate said, with a smile. "You've become *One of Us.*" And he touched the bandage where the 'X' was carved, saying "Git me 'The Rules' Bilbow!"

Bilbow rushed forwards with a scroll of parchment. He handed it up to O'Shea who was putting on his spectacles and then he took it, untied the ribbon and unfurled it before them all. He took his time doing all this and when he cleared his throat all around stood quietly. 'Wow, the First Mate has such power with the crew!' Chandler told himself.

"All hands agree to the following a'board..." he looked around.

"No wemen aboard..." everyone laughed and he corrected, "...no more wemens aboard." And they all applauded. He smiled, he had them all in his grip!

"Well, no more ooogly wemen aboard!" and they all laughed even more. "Oy coulda made an excepshin to the rooooooles fer that Rosie Goirl! Whut's wrong with the Captain these days!?"

"Oy dunno, Meester O'Shea!" Bilbow cried. "She ware a foine lasss!"

"Let's capture ooos more female booty!" Barow cried.

"It ain't in the rooooooles!"

"Blast ye rooooooles!"

O'Shea hissed "Qoy-it on deck!" and the he read the rest of the rules... no this, no that, how to split up the booty and so on. Then they made Chandler take a swig of rum to attest to it.

The spell of the Gyre had settled firmly upon him now and the crew gathered 'round, teasing, patting his head affectionately, and one was pouring him a tankard of rum...ah... the fiery, forbidden drink! He drank it! "He ware a'falling on in..."

One of us...

*If
the Seawell had not been so smoothe, in the red sky, like a savage Sea-lullaby...
If
the sun had not been a'setting over Savannah, with the Arctic Terns, flew by and
by!
If
all had not been so free, aye, to master what they, themselves had and, as no
other men upon the watery world would;
What would it all be?
Piracy!
And
If
the high Seas not been so very gloriously immense...
yet on most days they did master her,
the treacherous, bewitching Sea!
And now,
the moon loomed larger than the world of the land by night
shining her ways through the stays and spars,
lighting big pools o' the moon' all about the ships' wake;
While
the rum that burned through their Corridors,
igniting wanton fires,
of the conquerors that they really were, indeed,
Alas!
Of our wild, longing hearts be...
To The Dark Lords of the Sea!*

*For If
we faced ourselves squarely,
God spare thee,
We all longed to be this free!*

'O of drunken soliloquays of the deep, dank, slithering Seas! I am drunk on them!' I cried and lay down on foredeck, looking aloft at the high fore-top royal yardarms hove-to in the Sea of stars overhead.

"One of us', aye, mates, that what it weare reckoned to belonged to them, and the savage comradeship they proffered to the end - Aye, to the end, mates, whatever that may be!"

Languish

Most of the folks in the pub wondered who Shaw really was, for, they had noticed, years ago, that there was, indeed, a faint 'X' scar upon his cheeks. He never really would answer people's questions as to how that bewildering mark had got there, causing much intrigue, for it was no ordinary scar! It was a scar of fights and battles, Aye! It was a scar of wars!

But he used to joke it off to them: "Oh, Oy got that one from floy fishing!"

Shaw was laughing his tale, lost in it.

And they looked at each other – had the boy really become *One of Them*? In their minds, it was a deep transformation - of an innocent kid into one of the lost creatures and monsters of the coastline and it was mysterious as it was intoxicating as well as forbidden and unknown, like the deep unfathomed waters all around them! The boy'd been initiated into the dark realm of the underwater, where all kinds of forbidden fish had swum, where the mermaidens had dwelled, and, maybe where the lost treasure did lie!

But, Shaw carried on, seemingly oblivious to the new-born fascination the crowd now had of him, for he had gone over the bar, he had transformed... and was he now lost?

But Shaw was lost in the lush reliving of his tale:

"Both ships' cooks had finished the roasted lambs and all hands had heartily cut themselves heaping pieces. Captain Janvier's cook, Albert, brought out all kinds of fruits and treats, that they had gathered in Savannah.

After he loaded Cap'n's plate and brought it up to him, he suddenly thought of Edith and the poor, former Captain of his, down below, missing this feast - he'd better feed the prisoners!"

He rather floated down to the aft cabin where they were temporarily locked into with the big platter filled with the steaming meat and the side dishes. By now, he was quite drunk, and he tried to conceal it.

"Oh!" Edith said. "Wow, that looks good!"

"Bon appétit." The boy bumbled out.

"Ah! Thank you, Chandler!" And Edith dug right in, filling her plate with heaping steaming sections of meat. "Oh my!" she cried. "It's too wonderful!" and she dug in.

But Capt McKinney just stared at him, not touching the steaming plate at all. Finally he asked:

"What's going on above?"

"I - I don't know what I can say, sir." Chandler bumbled out. He wasn't supposed to tell them anything!

Thus Captain McKinney knew something was afoot, and that the young boy would say nothing about it.

And then the boy turned to flee and Captain McKinney saw the bandage on the poor kid's face and smelt his breath.

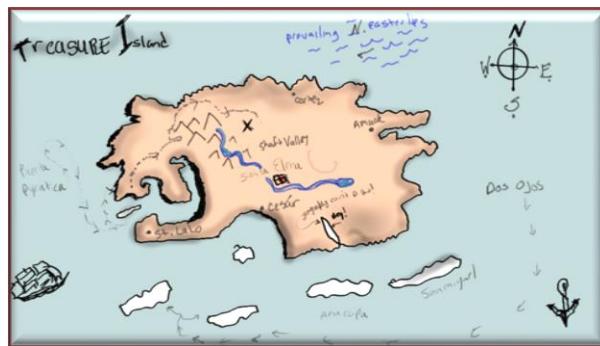
“What’s happened to you, Chandler?” he whispered in horror. “Have you joined them?”

And the poor kid turned and fled out the hatch!

Part III Recurve

“Whatsoever a man soweth, thereby shall he reap.”

Picture: The Treasure Map



E.

The Legend of Port Royal

When the hateful, mean sun came up the next day, all hands of both ships were quite hungover, and, what a dreadful feeling! Cap'n lay about until four bells, irritably swatting away René, who had brought chow to his side, in bed. Chandler brought him tea in bed and tried hard not to upchuck in front of him, but he rushed to the taffrail a couple of times and put a few loads back into the Sea. Most of the crew of *The Duck* was not to be seen on their deck all morning. The boy only had vague memories of them departing across the brow as the red rays of the sun were coming up from underneath and the rest of the night was lost in a mist of the drink, dance, and the screetch of the wild seafiddle as the beat of the narcotic drum pounded on an on and on, oh, all night long!

Only René had been sober and awake all this time and thus he served as the sole sentinel over both ships should their numerous enemies attack at this very opportune time! Many various and 'little' actions like this one made Rene the most beloved man amongst both crews. He even managed to cook their gruel as he constantly watched the coast, astern. He looked and then he stirred, looked and stirred. The relentless demands of the crews' stomachs would demanded much – once they woke up, though at dawn all were dead drunk - except him.

Later Chandler was leaning over the gunwhale, wondering when this dreadful seasick feeling would pass; wondering if even René's most kind gruel could tame it.

"Ye got yer foirst hangover, bo-woy!" O'Shea came up behind him, startling him, and told him, laughing. "Time to pay dues to the drenk, bo-woy!"

Ah, what a life! They bellyached about going ashore, these men, seacreatures ever, who could not dare go ashore here on the Carolinian or Georgian Coasts! Safe haven was hundreds of miles away along the swampy and untamed Gulf Coasts or on specialty Caribbean islands like Port Royale, created especially for them. And the quesy rocking of the waves heaped upon them much misery. The kid went and hid in his swing, and he heard:

"Oh, but for the rest of the day on land!"

And then he remembered with a jolt -- he had drunkenly joined them!

Never Land, oh never again!

Mid morning, Captain La Fourche rang for the cook and told him to invite Captain Janvier and his officers for a late lunch. René was immediatley overwhelmed without the kid helping him as the steward, so he sent the watch to wake him up, "gently" he said, but the watch shook him, unmercifully, of course.

In a record four hours René had set another feast in the fresh air of the poop deck.

They all came aboard and sat down at the rigged up table, Captain LaFourche at the head, his friend, Luc, to his right, O'Shea to his left.

"To last night!" they toasted.

"To rum!"

"Next time we need to capture a few goirls." O'Shea griped.

"No, one on board is enough!" scowled Cindahr.

"Has she told us our tale, yet?" O'Shea asked the Captain.

"No, not yet." That thought brought Cap'n his headache back and he rubbed his brow heavily.

And they all ate together in silence.

After they finished, Captain Janvier cleared his throat. "I have some rather astounding news to tell you all now." He said looking all around once they had finished their food. "I didn't want to spoil the party last night."

"What's that?" O'Shea spoke.

"Port Royale is gone." Captain Janvier said, simply.

"What do you mean '*gone!*'" O'Shea uttered.

"She is gone, Marcus. She sunk in the Sea in a huge earthquake a couple of years ago! Never to be seen again!"

"That Cain't be!" O'Shea cried out. "You're a liar!" he said. He was breathing hard, his old face puffy.

"It is the truth."

"How can a city just sink into the Seal!"

"She was built on sand, sir and she just slid into the Sea in a giant earthquake!"

We all sat there stunned with this news. "How is it that we haven't heard about this!" he cried.

"We were on the other side of the world!" Cap'n told him.

"This cannot be! It cannot be!" ranted the First Mate.

"It was."

"You lie!! You lie!!"

"I do not lie." Said the Captain Janvier, solemnly and heartfully towards the First Mate.

"Me pub?!" he cried, his eyes grew terrorized. "Me pub?!"

"Was it facing Kingston Harbor?"

"Yes on James Street!"

"It is gone."

"How do you *know* that?"

"There is no more James Street, nor most of the others."

"Me son managed me pub!" he cried, putting his hands through his hair in anguish. "What happened to me son?"

The Captain shook his head, heartfully towards the First Mate.

"Why are you telling me such lies!?"

"I am not, sir." Captain Janvier said. "I saw it for myself. I tried to sail in right after the earthquake. I even had to go across the bay to moor in Kingston, instead."

"Me girls!" O'Shea cried, horror-struck. "Surely they escaped!!!"

"A few large waves hit it too, after the quake." He shook his head. "Thousands died that day."

"No! I'm going to kill you!" he jumped up with his hands out to strangle Captain Janvier, but everyone around him grabbed him and pulled him back!

"The whole city has completely vanished under ten feet of water!"

"No! It can't be! It can't be!" he threw his arms on the table and his head sunk into them and he began to shake his head and weep. "No! It can't be! It can't be! It can't be. It can't!"

Cap'n put his arm across O'Shea's back, while his other hand covered his own mouth, in horror and sorrow and the boy remembered René's first words about Cap'n being 'good-hearted' as he comforted his villainous First Mate's utter madness of sorrow.

"How can this be? How can this be!" he ranted, on and on. "I've lost it all now! I've lost it all! I am surely in hell! I'm in hell!"

Without even asking, René went to Cap'n's great room and brought O'Shea a large bottle of his rum. O'Shea savagely grabbed it from him and he poured almost a third of it down his throat right then and there. And between the Captain and René, they hauled the weeping, staggering First Mate to his cabin, where he stayed a week, drunk. We were all very touched and sorry for the First Mate and his beautiful, lost girls, for he had lost the only treasure he had ever reckoned to have, and many mates thought he would be never the same again.

At four bells they managed to send Captain Janvier and his crew solemnly back to their ship.

Both ships then hoisted anchors and pulled apart and carefully nosed out into the open ocean and *The Duck* sailed alongside them, assuredly, for many a day; until a Nor'easter separated the two comrade-ships apart and all hands savagely fretted over whether they would ever meet their friend – their only friend - ever again, in a Sea surrounded by hostility, hurricanes and the Royal Navy.

Interlude

"As we ventured closer to the lower latitudes of the tropics, the brooding overcast of the ceiling loomed so low that *The Sea* seemed to swallow up the clouds at the horizon. And her color, mirroring the moody clouds above her, became dingy, grey and swollen, as if even *The Sea*, herself, was swelled up like a dead fish!" And we all brooded around on deck, in oilskins for the sudden onslaught of tropical rainstorms.

And yet, on other mornings, the skies were clear and the clouds began to pop like cotton puffs all up in the bright, aching, blue skies. In the sweltering afternoons the puffs grew with the heat of the day, higher and higher, to become ominous, dangerous, enormous towering cumulus giants, that, in the evenings, stood upon the seadecks and fought each other with arrows of lighting, cloud-to-cloud. The bolts that flew out looked like canon shots, for their fiery tales, had burnt out their ends before the heads did, en route, and leaving single shots of bolts that flew for miles across the waters. Even the skies fought with canon battles t'Sea!

Then the nights would descend, when the intense battles were fought with spectacular tree branching of lightning, that lit up the entire storms as they roared across the open waters! Oh, the nights in the tropics of fury!

Like the brooding Seas, Cap'n, too, was restlessness, as the casks of water, once again, got lighter and the days got longer and hotter. He paced the deck, more and more and faught duels and drank rum at night, for the next provisions were on St. Petro, and up the fortified Augustine River, two hundred nautical miles away!

But, Chandler guessed what must really have layed heavily on Captain's mind was Edith, for the kid had been witness to just about every tangle with her, and it seemed that the Cap'n still not breached the subject of the treasure map with her! Though Cap'n betrayed nothing, surely the matter must have been weighing heavy on him as they drew nearer the haunted, tropical Seas and to 'The Golden Islamorada.'

Chandler discovered that the crew followed these things closely, too, and sometimes had asked about her at night, in whispers, as they went to sleep.

René had informed the kid that Captain would probably wait until someone got injured before the boy could be a full time midshipman, for, it would be a big step down for a crewman to take his place as steward. For instance, Big Mortenson, who'd once been the First Mate, sat about all day by the chest with a scimitar holstered and a pistol strapped across his chest, for he had injured his back, a few years ago, in the attack on the *Isle of Shay* and he was now the ship's Master of the Treasury - a 'skate' job, but not one earned without honor.

More than a week passed and O'Shea seemed to have recovered some of his interest in living and he had said now that he just wanted to sail back to Port Royal, that, surely some of his girls had survived and surely some of his tavern could be reclaimed from the Sea. Though most sensed he was lying to himself, they accorded his words, so he would not loose all heart, as he had done the full week before.

One morning Mr.O'Shea ordered the boy to follow him up on the foremast yard ostensibly to learn to furl the top-most sails.

Though he was quite old, he flew up the foremast spar like a cat and Chandler could barely keep up with him. He stepped on the yard line and fearlessly trod out to the very end, gesturing for the boy to follow, with his head.

It was the very first time he'd ever gone past the lower top yard and he carefully climbed over the dangling fudducks and holding tightly, he aligned his foot with the rope and cried "Stepping on Starboard!" as required. There was nothing beneath him now except the rope and the deck a hundred feet below! And all around them the great big blue Sea! And she rocked them now, athwartships - side to side, as if to remind them of the furious Seas that would always come upon them sooner not later.

Shaw sang: "Tick--Tock--Tick--Tock! She did rock them in this strange lullaby, that was impunity to men of the suffering Sea!"

When he got way out on the yard, the First Mate stood on the line up there, so perfectly at home on the high spar, and drilled him all about Edith:

"How be the lady, Miss Edith?"

"Fine, sir." Chandler said, his mind was more on his hand-hold. He looked down the great long mast. He must not ever become afraid of heights, but he decided he would be very careful up there on the spar! How was he supposed to grab sail and furl it? It was so high!

"No, bo-woy, that's not what Ah means... How be the missus in telling us of the treasure map?"

"I don't think she's said too much, yet, sir."

"What's belaying her, son?"

"I don't know, sir." He answered, fearful of saying too much more.

"We're worried, bo-woy cuz she's so stubbayrn. She does as she thinks roight, no matter what the cost! We're not so sure Cap'n can make 'er talk."

The kid looked all the way down to the foredeck. What would happen to a loyal midshipman, if his master ware in trouble? He could see Edith now, through all the various stays'l's and riggings, sitting near the bow, reading her book all by herself.

"Thar sits the most obstinate woman on t' Earth!" the First Mate cried, following the boy's glance downwards. How he growled as he'd said that, it was obvious how he heartily disliked her!

The cost of her obstinace, however, would not be hers, alone, to bear, for, if she did not provide the whereabouts of the treasure; would Cap'n would pay for it, somehow, as well? Had he banked everything on winning it out of her? The boy was suddenly afraid for his captain. 'Jeopardy' clanged in the back of the boy's head, '*Jumping, jumping, jeopardy!*' he thought as he looked at the deck, way down, below.

After he had come down the mast, the boy watched Edith all that day; for, she seemed like she had backed off further and further, as if she knew of Cap'n's true intentions. If she did, she said little, for, either she was either very canny, or very stupid; he could not tell which one. But he did know one thing: if she didn't help

them find the treasure soon, the crew might throw her overboard - skirt, verb chart, English Grammar lessons and all!!

And all along, they sailed closer and closer to the island...closer and closer...and the provisions and provisions dwindled down, lower and lower...

On the twenty third day of July, the watch sighted one of the Windward Islands called 'Queeley's Island,' two days off. Cap'n Janvier had told them the Royal Navy now used that harbor - one more contentious island base for their enemies! Cap'n bypassed it in a storm-lit night, though their kegs of water badly needed filling.

The Tangle

Edith was allowed to roam the ship these days after she gave out all the lessons; and she wandered aft and was shocked to see a big island in the distance - it was Queely's Island! She recognized it for herself; it was a British port, full of amenities from home and probably ships headed back for New England and she desperately wanted to go there!

She knocked on his door and walked in on the captain. He sat on his plush chair in the great room, just staring at his charts while drumming his fingers on the velvet. He got up when he saw her come in and then stood by the window, glancing waterward.

"Good evening, Edith."

"Good, evening, sir."

"All fairs well with ye?"

"No, Captain, I'm going to be blunt: I still wonder why you are keeping me here! You've just by-passed Queely's Island - why can't I just be rowed ashore!"

"No." he said simply, making her fingernails curl into her palms, she was so mad.

"Why do you have me here? Certainly it's not for the English lessons!"

"I enjoy yer company; ye're educated."

"Now, Captain, don't play me for a fool. You are a most handsome man, surely you can find other intelligent women - even, like the saying goes, '*One in every port!*'"

His mind snapped straight back to *The Pink Lady*. "Shhhoooosh!" he cried, and pounded his fist upon the sill: "The ports are all full of whores!" And they were as dangerous as manta rays, sharp and ever circling around - their stingers in their tales!

And he paced minute or two, wondering if he should bring up the subject of the treasure map.

No, he decided that she needed more romance... As they stood there in silence, he consulted his memory of one books that he'd just read... on page 32, was it? It was like a tactician's manual for him! Ah, that's when Malcolm Kent just reaches over and kisses Sarah - ah, yes! He glanced over to her. He liked charming the boots right off her! He could do and say whatever he wanted to for, unlike *The Pink Lady*, she had no interest in extorting money or a living from him - her desire appeared plain and uncomplicated before him. No fluff.

He glanced over again... but the very looming predicament of the map was heavy upon him again, -- and, what if she really did refuse to help? Surely she wouldn't! But, he had to admit it, he was a bit worried! He, the unstoppable captain of *The Cyclone*, victorious over 56 ships, was scared of a woman! And, thus so particularly perplexed, he could do nothing more than laugh at himself! And when he did he saw that she, too, watched him, like a Sea hawk!

"What, Captain? Why are you laughing at me?"

"I'm not!! I'm laughing at meself!"

"Why's that?"

He could say nothing back, but, while smiling broadly, he shook his head and then grabbed her arm.

"Why did you do that?"

"Quiet." He said, pulling her arm over and then he grabbed the other and he did it, he kissed her fully on the mouth! "There!"

She gasped. "Captain, why did you do that?"

He looked down to her smiling the ravenous smile he was well known for:

"Because I felt like it, *gurl*."

And, then, he grabbed her up and down her body.

"I was afraid of something like this." She whispered as he kissed her ear.

"I know." He breathed into her ear.

"What are you going to do to me?" she whispered back, breathless

Her heart pounding away in her bosom upon his chest and he knew just then, that she had never ever even once been kissed! Not even in a schoolyard! *Jamais!*

Never! Nunca! Niemal!

"What do ye want me to do?" he answered, but he did not let her answer and filled her lips with soft kisses. He remembered that these very words also were stolen from Sarah Chutney's book '*The Damsel*.' And, like the hero, he kissed her up and down her neck! He snickered a little.

"You're laughing at me again!" she cried pulling back.

He grabbed her waist. "Ah yes! That was a line I quoted from the *fine* book '*The Damsel*,' Madame."

"So?"

"So, it was funny to me!"

"So, you're following the books – step by step?"

"Why not?" he said, his breath heavy upon her earlobes and his mouth was following down her neckline.

"They are not intended as a charm-course for men, Captain." She chided, though, it seemed, she still let him kiss her.

"It's enjoyable to see how women think!"

"..."

"It's like mind reading."

"..."

"It's like steering our ship, knowing where the winds want to blow her and knowing her ways and plays of her curtsy through the water-waves!" he said, trying to sound like a novelist, which caused him even more mirth! If he ever got a way from all of this madness he could make his living as a romance novelist!

"I – I think we better slow down, Captain." She finally said, breathless.

And he relaxed his grasp on her a little, still smiling "Okay."

"What are your intentions with me?" she asked.

"Mon Deau, Madame! Ye are too serious! Have ye not the tiniest speck of humour?? "

"Do we have a future together?"

"Possibly, can ye see yourself with a pirate?"

"I'm not sure."

"Okay." He said, releasing her a little bit more, gently.

"Was that for real?" she asked.

"What do ye think?"

"I'm not sure..."

"Sure of what?"

"...if you want me – OR MY MAP!"

There! She had said it! It was out in the open now! At last! They had leveled with each other!

He breathed out: "I want them both!"

But she had her proof now!!

"I knew it!! You're just after my map!"

"Ah...says ye! Can't ye see we enjoy each other's company?"

She turned away quickly. "I'm an ugly, old maid, Captain La Fourche."

"No, you're intelligent and I like kissing ye." And he reached over and put some more on her. Feeling her tremble he was glad to see that he was not lying, he was enjoying sweeping her away thus and he kissed her more!

"Now what do ye think of that, Edith!"

"You want the map pretty darn bad."

"Awwwh! Come off, that Edith!" He swept away from her. "It doesn't suit ye!"

"I shudder to think what you'd do to me if I *ever* gave it to you!!!"

"You can have your own fair share of a very great fortune!"

"Balderdash!"

"No, it's not!! Look, this ship splits booty across all hands, which means ye too, Edith. Why would I single you out? Our ways are common knowledge to everyone." Then he quipped a polictician-like phrase: "It's democracy in action."

"Captain, I prefer to work for *my* living!"

"Ye have been – here teaching oos English!"

"To be paid with blood money! NO!"

"How should ye be paid, then? I do have my own private funds, as well."

"No!"

He looked out the porthole, meditating on her life so cast before him. "What do ye want Edith, to be a governess or tutor of some rich merchant's spoiled kids?"

"Yes! It's a straight forwards, *honest* living!"

"And let's just say, further tragedy should follow ye – and ye don't find that household with the benevolent master, but a tyrant, or an abusive man or a molester? What about the plague, hurricanes, floods, Indian attacks -- or, no open positions for a school teachers... or...more pirates?"

"I have a splendid education and am the top of my trade. I will get by!"

"Perhaps, but I am offering ye a very real, certain fortune RIGHT NOW!"

"I will get robbed, just like everyone else who gets a hold the Inca gold!"

"And, I've thought of that already, too, Edith." And he held up a finger, and pulled out a key on a lanyard, from under his blouse. He pulled it over his hair, and got down on his haunches and pulled out a chest, between his boots, that he'd tucked under his rack and opened it with the key. He then pulled out a long, heavy, ruby, emerald and diamond encrusted golden necklace. He held it dramatically up in the light from the porthole and it sparkled its decadent, curse'd charm before her.

"This isn't Inca gold at all, Edith. It belonged to a mistress of the Shah of Persia." He twirled it before her.

"How did you *ever* get that, Captain?" she winced from a sharp stab of jealousy.

"I got it in India and, like the fine ladies of Calcutta, you'll wear your fortune around your neck, and in your bosom, which, you've made so very safe."

To her misfortune, she imagined all the fabulous beauties all around him in India and everywhere! And jealously she spat out:

"I will have none of that gold!"

"Then, God help ye..." He said, lowly.

"He WILL help me!" she stomped her heals.

"...against the crew." He sighed. "I cannot protect ye from them any longer without the treasure map!"

"You are the Captain!"

And he suddenly plopped down in the great chair greatly defeated, leaning over the arm, putting his hand over his eyes, his long legs stretched out, tired, before him, and he said no more.

It was just as he had feared. Now she'd have to find out for herself about his own crew and what he faced near every damn day out to Sea for the last two decades! And he waved, with his fingers on his brow, for her to leave.

She was astonished to see him give up like this! She had not once seen defeat from him! Suddenly she was frightened, she turned briskly on her heals to leave, opened the hatch -- and barged right into O'Shea, who stood there, smiling, as if he'd heard the entire conversation and knew of every word!

She gasped.

He glared at her most malevolently smiling and leaning over her and she backed up a step.

"Good afternoooooon, Madame."

The Captain stomped behind her within inches and she was sandwiched tightly between the two towering pirates, his breath on the back of her neck as he roared:

"Mr. O'Shea, change course for the Indian Ocean by way of Cape Good Hope!!"

"Sir!!"

"Head up the far side of Africa, for Madagascar and then for East India!"

"Why's that, Cap'n!!!" he screamed!

"Madame has decided *not* to help us find the St. Jameston treasure!"

"Oh, she did, did she!" O'Shea's eyes grew big and he was looking at her from inches away. The stale smell of rum came as big, stagnant cloud from his breath!

"So, now we'll have to find other treasures!"

"Such as?!" His eyes grew big upon her.

"Trade off the horn of Africa!"

"That should take about three years, sir!"

"Maybe longer!"

"Maybe much longer, Captain!" O'Shea steamed and began to lean closer and closer to her. "Daniel, she might find that others on board are not as...gracious as Captain La Fourche." He said tilting his head, screwing in the point quite well and she was shaking. He leaned in just inches from her face, as if to kiss her as well, and she could see the golden flecks adrift in his hazel eyes of a man that could kill - aye! - of a man that *had* killed! His golden eyes spoke of - *Murder!*

"AND, she will stay on board with us until it is found!"

"Yessir!"

"That could be for years!" she cried.

"That's right, Edith. Go to your compartment, Edith; and Mr. O'Shea, lock her on it! I have spoken!!"

And with that he turned and slammed the hatch behind her.

And then O'Shea drug her across the deck, as she saw the Captain storm from his cabin to the helm, screaming:

"Heave to Crew! Heavy course change! Brrrrring her full aboot!"

The two helmsmen began to spin the huge wheel.

The Boatswain blew the order with his pipe and the full crew ran up on deck and were pouring up the masts. The deck thundered with their bare feet.

And they screamed as the many command answers echoed for and aft and up the tall masts:

"We're bringing her full aboot! Cap'n says we're bringing 'er full aboot!"

"What!"

"Why!"

"I dunno, let's git up t'mast!"

And she watched as Captain grab the helm away from the watch, himself, and then *The Cyclone* banked over in a sharp turn-to Port as the sails jibed, sweeping dangerously across the deck. She fell down as the ship banked and heaved heavily into the Seas and Captain ordered:

"Brace the halyards!"

"Swing the jibs'le."

"Pullins set stays'ls."

"Rudder amidships!"

"Bring the boom about!"

"Aye, Cap'n!"

In a record five minutes *The Cyclone* now flew South-by-South-East, into the very heart of the Atlantic, and, alas, towards world's away!

And the First Mate shoved her into the little room. "Oy cuss the day we found ye!" and he slammed the hatch in her face.

Madagascar

"What have I done to myself -- again!" she cried, now, in the dark little hut. But the worse thing was that this time, she'd cut all ties, burnt all bridges! All because of her imperious manner! She reasoned with herself, this ladylike, but insistant manner had kept her safe from pirates all this time, for her story, if she would ever write it, would be one without all the ravishing noted in the common romance novels (that she loved).

This time they'd really given up on her, for the ship now sailed boldly towards a new destination so very far away! This time, she'd really had done it! Why not just give them their treasure map! She pounded on the bulkhead to see the Captain, but she soon found out that the entire ship had been ordered to ignore her!

Lunch came - a couple of hard tack wafers - as hard as wood chips and a half a cup of water. When she begged the boy for more food, he told her that they were 'low on rats' - or rations - because they were heading towards in the middle of the Atlantic and the nearest provisions were two thousand miles away! She became quite weak upon hearing this news, with no hope to sustain her. When René came in for items she begged him, to talk to the Captain on her behalf. But he told her that the Captain had refused to see her.

She wondered what she would face in the unfathomably far seas: Disease? Malaria? Desentary? How would she fair with a crew that now despised her?

And she heard the crew, all around her in the small hut on deck:

"Hear that, Cabbage! Captain says we're off to the I.O.!"

"The Indian Ocean!"

"Yes!"

"I can't bu-lieve it!!" he cried in anguish. "I don't want to go there, again!!"

"Just let me get my hands on that wench!"

"Dragging us all across the world!!"

"Miss 'I-Don't-Help-Pirates' Edith!"

"Miss, I'm-better-than-you-are, Edith Prousit!!"

"I don't want to go to Bombay, again! It's too far away!"

"I don't like thur food!"

Another pounded on the otherside of the bulkhead, terrifying her: "Now, we're gonna geeeeeet-cha gurl!"

"Ah, now we'll never catch up with *The Duck!*"

"Ah *The Duck!*!" they cried in great and terrible anguish "*The Duck!*"

"Maybe they'll get our gold instead!"

"OH! HOW I HATE HER!"

"It's ALL her fault!"

"Just let me get me hands on 'er!"

One of them pounded on the hatch "Let me at her!! Let me at her!!!"

Ten men had to pull him away.

"She'll nare get home NOW!"

And later that night some unknown, sick and deranged crewman whispered nasty intentions through the cracks that night "I know ye can hear me Eeee-dith...so, this is what I'm going to do as soon as they give me the go-ahead..."

She pressed her fingers into her ears, rocking and crying streams of tears. There was no one there to protect her, now, no, no one at all!!

And, worst of all was that he would now be savage to her and, it had always been this way, that once a man's whiles and charm had left them that, their real brute, cocksure actions came out. But he had been hers for the taking! She thought now. She cried and cried. Her one and only opportunity with a man had been missed! Even if it was only a lie...

As she sat there in the next few days, she had time to ponder her real self, though, and she realized her struggle was deeper than just gold. If only they only knew that she'd knew that just been ugly all her life - *no amount of gold could account for the shame of wanting a man who didn't really want her* – his charm had deeply shamed her for he only wanted the gold! And so she wouldn't break - she'd rather DIE! It was her shame thus, her most secret shame and, her most unbreakable pride that was *her* treasure! "*For my ways are not your ways!!*" she cried to herself, "*Can not one man upon earth understand me!!*" And she lay down there in the gloom and let herself waste away. To die was better than to live on in this great shame of loving, and yet being so ugly and unloveable!

On the fourth morning of this confinement she heard commotions and pressed her ear to the hatch and discovered that they were about to turn to attack a ship. "Oh God! Not again!!"

The Second Battle of *The Vantage*

At dusk, when the sky was all red and mad at them, the watch cried from on high: "Ship HO!"

And the crew ran to the starboard rail, where, most could see a tiny speck on the horizon.

"It's *The HMS Vantage!* She's been following us!" Cap'n told O'Shea. "She's after us."

"We're her booty!" she heard Cabbage cry.

The rest of the crew thundered upon deck and cried out when they saw their foe astern!

Cap'n stayed on deck, with his scope, until no more could be seen of her. Then he posted a heavy watch throughout the night and ordered Gunner Mead to ready the cannons. O'Shea, himself, posted the boy ontop the mainmast crow's next: 'Fer his strong yeng oyies.'

"He climbed up the high, pitching mast and there he would sit, alone, watching until the last of the sunbeams sank under the horizon. The Sea was soon to be a dark world spun beneath him and all around him – and his young mind was all a'fancy of the mermaiden and seamonsters dream-fed to him every night by the most prodigiously imaginative crew ever, who's richness in seastory was only matched their greed for gold!"

But, after only an hour and the sun was still up, O'Shea decided to send Coborg up to relieve him. The First Mate told him "Get a good, long berth in the rack and get rested to be fresh for the next morning's chase, *Midshipman Chandler*." He stressed. So, he would go back up on the mast, before even the first rays of the dawn would light up that darkened ship out there, in the night, where the oncoming battle waged more wars with his imaginations of stalking ships, than out there in the battlefields and siegeworks of a Sea's trenches!

Bone tired, he slept soundly for a long while, to right before four in the morning, and then the watch had to shake him awake. And René brought to his hammock hot tea and pastries and ate it with him there, his fat rump on the hammock stretched the hemp taught and Chandler had no room so he sat on deck, while René whispered fortifying the kid with his kind words of good cheer. The boy noted that the Captain himself must have sent the cook to personally wake him, for no one was allowed to eat below, unless dreadfully sick or maimed, and thus, there was urgency here, and he began to feel important, for, O'Shea had personally chosen him to keep a good watch and climb the mast again in the blackest portion of the night!

During his long sleep they had entered into an enormous fetch of wavetrains, and by now She had grown into a mountainous Sea.

He had dressed warmly in oilskins, but it was still so cold - the rains had chilled him and he stood at the base of the mast and gulped - acutely regretting the

life of the Sea, and then, as if he had summoned him up from his own youthful imagination, the Captain, himself, appeared standing there, by his side, in the dark, holding a small lantern up to his face, urging him on: "This is a man's job! Go on, boy, do good, hang on, and ye'll come down this mast A MAN today!"

"Aye-Aye, Captain!" he cried and then up the dark and slimy ladder he swiftly went, well fortified by these rich rite of initiation! Cap'n had summoned up within him the very courageous life of a sailor man! And at the top of the mast in the deep hollowing of the storm, he tied himself in with a bowline and a painter's seat round the mast and then he held on with all his might!

The Sea, with all her whiles, was at full force now and She rode her sailors up and down the backbones of Her spine of building and bronching seas. And Her vicious winds spoke curses right into sailor's ears, who saught gold as good as if it were harm! A sailor's only insurance lie in the strength of his arms cling - against a most mighty, bewitching Sea!

Hours later, The Sea, Herself, tired of Her own tantrums, decided to calm Her mood and ceded Herselfs to the rays of daybreak and the gentleness of the Sun at dawn, whose pink invasion slowly slid across the sky to reveal the shallow seafogs of the Atlantic Anticyclone.

And one hour, hence, the boy suddenly saw the other ship close in! Her masts appeared almost beneath him! "Ship Ho!" he screamed and rang the bell vigorously "Ship Ho! Ship Ho! Ship Ho!"

"Where boy! Where!" they screamed, for they could not yet see.

He screamed back down: "Starboard bow! Close in! Collision! Sound Collision Bell!"

Suddenly, like a ghost out of the gloom, the gray sails of *The Vantage* intruded and the jib boom stabbed into the gunwhales!

Edith awoke in time to hear the watches' cries "Collision!" and the roar of men about to go into battle! She was terrified to be in the very midst of it in a tiny little shack on the deck!

"Thar she blows!" she heard Cabbage cry. "She's right upon us!"

Then she could hear Captain cry to the Gunner - "Seventh Cannonade - Fire!" and three cannons trained on the mainmast of the ship fired.

And then a crash of upper spars and a "BOOOM!" The two ships collided! Men screamed as they fell from both ships into the Sea! She could hear their splashes and cries as they swam between both hulls. Now a battle ensued and Edith could even hear the accents of the Royal Marines as they boarded *The Cyclone*. Screaming to them, Edith pounded on the hatch! "Help me! Oh! Help me! I'm a prisoner! Release me!"

Chandler had frantically untied himself to descend swiftly down the mainmast, when the collision of *The Vantage* knocked him completely off the mast and into the Sea, where he found himself completely submerged underwater and then grasping for the ship's mossy sides as she slid quickly away!!

Edith had flung herself to the deck and crawled under the shelves. Numerous shells pitted the bulkhead:

"*Thick-thick-thick-thick-thick-thick-thick!*" Sounds pounded all around her, as her little shack stood in the very heart of the battle!

"*Thick-thick-thick-thick-thick-thick-thick!*"

Then she heard an intense "BOOOM!" and splintering, like a giant tree, and a then a deep shudder as one of the other ship's main masts came down on the deck and the rest, sail and all splashed heavily into the Sea.

"Good shot Captain!!" O'Shea cried.

"Oh, no!" she cried, it was the mast of her would-be rescuer's ship!

The boy scrambled somehow fifty yards in the swells towards the wreckage of the rigging trailing aft of the stern, and when he finally reached it he found a handhold on riggings that had tangled along *The Cyclone*'s aft tack and he clung there, now, for his very life!

More fire: "*Thick-thick-thick-thick-thick-thick-thick!*"

She could hear the boatswain's pipe and Captain cried over the melee. "Fire!" and the port side of the ship thundered and trembled. And a moment she could smell the tangy gunpowder smoke. Then he cried:

"Bring her about!" and "Make Sail! Let's get the hell out of here!" he had cried.

She felt the ship bank and 'lean-to' the wind and the shooting sounds of the Marines got further and further away!

'What a battle!' She thought, crying and Captain La Fourche had been so commanding, for he had taken on a Royal Navy Ship and reigned victorious! What had ever crossed her mind that such a man like him could love a poor little wench like her! And she crawled under the shelves where the cook kept the drippings and where the rats lived. And the cook had found her there, hours later, dazed and pulled her out, and lay her out on the rack, and spoon-fed her hot porridge, sayin' softly "*There-there, lass. There-there.*"

Then they pulled away, limping, their stern rigging dragging heavily in the Sea. There was much wounded, for, though dazed and weak, as she lay there, she heard crying all around her little compartment and she honestly felt a kind of pity for the lost dredges of the pirate company.

"Help! Help! Help!" They heard a cry to the stern.

"It's Chandler! He's in the riggings overboard!" Faerburne called, pointing, 'In the Riggings - it's Chandler!"

And laughing in big relief, the crew hauled up the lines and pulled up the sodden and dazed kid, who had been there for the entire battle!

René wrapped him in woolen blankets and towels and saying "That'll earn ye one cup of hot rum!"

"Ye've been baptoized now, bow-oy," Faerburne told him, laughing warmly. "Name's Riggins Chandler fer him now, mates!"

He tried to smile at this new "honor" they'd given him - a pirate name! And they laughed as he just chattered his teeth and choked on the hot rum!

He had almost been lost to Sea! And later he cried some inside his woolen blanket, where no man could see! *Bristol and home, Bristol and home! O Bristol me home -- to me lee!*

René, and gave him more rum in a tin cup and, though sodden, he coiled up in the sun, by the foredeck boathouse, with the wounded, and fell into a deep slumber, of one who'd just fallen off the world!

Only one of the attackers survived and he sat on t' quarterdeck, gagged and hands were tied behind his back – he was one of the Royal Navy Marines, in uniform, and he was a big, strong man. Cap'n stuck his cutlass in between his eyes.

"Who are ye!!"

Gagged, but the stout Marine answered up, boldly:

"I'm Corporal Dennison, Royal Navy Marines, Sir!"

"You are now a prisoner, to dispose of in my convenience!" And he pressed the point into his brow.

"Yessir!" he cried and Captain La Fourche yanked the gag down from his mouth and the man cried out at once: "Nice to meet ye, Sire!!" he said smiling up at him.

"Hmmmph!"

"We all heard so much about you, sir!"

Captain waved his flattery off with gloved hands. "What's news of the world, Corporal Dennison?" he said wiping his cutlass with his hanky.

"England has signed a treaty with Spain, sir."

"And so?" Swish, Cap'n put his cutlass away.

"And so, now, they're hunting for you."

"I know." He swallowed.

"There's an enormous price - on just your head, alone."

"How much?"

"Twenty bars of gold!"

"Wow!" he said, stunned by his own imfamy!

"And six ships are after you, alone!"

"Six ships!!!"

"Six ships fully armed ships with a company of Royal Marines, each, like ours."

"Well, well!" He said swallowing, then his eyes narrowed: "Why are you telling me this, Marine?"

"Well, here I sits - at your service, sir! Thar's nothing to do but join your crew now, and git some gold, if you will have me, sir!"

"And bring all this misfortune down upon your head as well?"

"Might as well, little else I can do aboard here." He said shrugging.

Cap'n looked to O'Shea, who shook his head back, 'no.' And the Marine saw this interchange:

"Oh no, Captain, please don't make me a prisoner! Please!!! I've been a sailor, too! Meestair Marcus Oy can man all spots on the main! Give me a chance, Captain! Ye lost some crew today, roight? Let me take someone's place! I can't stand to be a prisoner, please!"

"We'll see if you can be trusted." Captain says, nodding to his gunner by his side. "Keep an eye on him, Mead. Chain him up and take him below."

"Aye, Captain."

"Please, Captain!" he cried, but they dragged him away.

Conditions aboard a Royal Navy ship were so inhuman to lower seamen, that it was not uncommon for a hand from the Royal Navy to jump ship to a pirate crew, but it fairly unusual for a Royal Marine to appear before a pirate crew and beg for clemency. They didn't know what to do with him. Thirty minutes ago this man had been shooting at them and had even jumped to their deck with a musket! Now was he to be trusted??

"Keep a *wary* good eye on him!" said Cap'n.

He surveyed his ship: Three dead, three lost at Sea, two severely wounded and thirty moderately wounded. Three spars were smashed, their tack tangled, the rudder afouled, ten sails shot up. Well, most of the men would heal; they had great new sailmakers - Machen and Lynchpin - on board to sew up the sails, and much of the ship could be fixed at Sea. But now, once again, they were low on gunpowder, cannon balls and shot!

Captain McKinney tries to save Captain La Fourche

Captain came to his room pondering the words of the Royal Marine, but there was no way to turn back now! Now they had to continue onto other treasures in the Indian Ocean and so far away! He sighed trying to accept the unacceptable. He poured himself a glass of rum and saw Captain McKinney watching him. Impatient to get the lecture over with he said:

"Well?" cried he, Cap'n La Fourche. "I know you want to say something, so say it!" He braced for more 'preaching.' He scowled.

McKinney nodded. "Yes."

"Let's have out then." He began disarming as they spoke. He sighed it would be comforting to have someone like Captain McKinney to talk to. He had been a ship's master as well, he knew of what they faced intimately, especially on such a long journey.

It seemed somehow that McKinney could say anything to the Captain and so he said:

"This will all catch up to you if you don't stop, Captain La Fourche." The Cap'n turned to him, held his cutlass which McKinney eyed and stopped. Cap'n La Fourche put it away and with gesture of impatience and plied McKinney to spake more.

"It's not too late to turn back."

"Done too much time on this tack." He quipped back and he turned to the porthole, hands on hips and out to Sea he glanced.

"You still upon this earth."

"Thar's no escaping our fate now." He said and actually sighed. It seemed he was of men and mortals after all!

"But, as you are still standing on this earth there's time." He had urgency in his voice.

"I'm not on the earth am I?" said he the Cap'n. And it was McKinney's time to sigh and Cap'n looked at him for once and upended ablutions on his tongue for such a course change surely would call for courage!

The Deadwaters, The Doom

Thankfully, the next day brought back the dead calm of the vast mid Atlantic Ocean Gyre; for its still waters allowed them to rest and mend ship's splintered spars and broken rails. Then they'd sew up her sails, holystone her decks and refit her ways to Sea; preparing her to beat back into the Southern Trades and ride down the coast of Africa in a few weeks. There would not be another ship ahead of them within two thousand miles! So they rested and licked their wounds, out there, in the middle of nowhere.

It was now time to talk to Corporal Dennison. Cap'n was having tea on the maindeck and personally supervising all the refitting, himself.

Cindahr brought up the prisoner, whose long chains clanked upon the deck.

"Good morning, Captain La Fourche!" he piped with that undampered enthusiasm of yesterday.

Captain waved it off. "Tell me the names and locations of the six ships after me."

As he stood there in chains he rattled off: "Aye sir, well, thar's *The Avon*, last seen off Jamaica, *The Spindle* just from Norfolk, *The Poetess - Liverpool*, *The Berkshire - Bristol*, *The Sarnac - London*, *The Vantage*, Bristol..." and onwards he went, with detailed and tactical information of the armada sent after him. He had such detailed information that Cap'n actually started to believe him; and he was getting more worried as the Marine spoke on.

"Tell me about your ship." He said and was sipping his tea glancing sternwards at times.

"Ah, she's a fast frigate. Made in Bournemouth Yards, Bristol."

"Fast enough to catch up to us?"

"Quite possibly so, sir. Yes, I do believe she is, sir."

"Tell me about her Captain."

"Captain Lawrence Jenkins, sir, be his name, he's from..."

Captain's mouth fell open.

"Ah...You know him sir."

"Indeed I do." He said and inhaled a big puff and involuntarily looked back aft once more. He was hoping that Jenkins was not still on board this ship. Ah! But, alas, he was! He was an avenging angel, sent to destroy him, for no amount of gold could halt that man!

"It's a small world out here, sir." The marine caught his flinch.

"Aye!" Of course he knew Captain Jenkins! He'd been the Master at Arms and the Second Mate on his very first ship - the very ship he'd been kidnapped onto!

"Sir, let me advise you on him!" The prisoner begged, holding his shackles in front of the Captain.

Captain sighed and then pulled a long, jeweled necklace from under his blouse, which had keys on it and he twisted a small key into the shackles, which sprung open. He beckoned O'Shea to get the logbook and sign the Marine aboard and gave him a

berth. Then he had René bring him a drink right on the quarterdeck! The marine sat down boldly at Captain's table without asking. He was a most confidant person.

"Well?" Captain crossed his arms, mad that this man would just sat down like he was his boatswain mate already! But he dropped this when he heard the marine's chilling words:

"Well, sir, there's nobody on this here ocean world that hates you more."

Yes, for there once was port and a liberty, and, the affections of a certain lady in London...

"After you sacked *The Saphire* off Virginia he obtained a Colonial commission to capture you sir."

His stomach heaved!

"The Governor of Virginia signed a bounty on the head of Captain La Fourche!"

"..."

"And these six ships were the ones in *The Chesapeake* at the time who took up the bounty hunt. They're *all* coming after you."

Now he knew that he would have company back to the Indian Ocean - a well armed and well funded fleet of adversaries! He was so depressed to admit, finally, that he had wanted the Jameston treasure to be his last! He shut his eyes tight - an image of the gallows flashed suddenly before him! Captain McKinney was right, things were catching up to him, fast - and - could all the gold in the world stop them??

And now, it seemed, they were going in the wrong direction of his desires! He now heaved a Sea anchor about his neck with a heavy tail to his lee! For, Captain Jenkins was a most dreadful foe: he was a Quaker or Puritan, and a man most ordained to unseat pirates; and he doubted a fallen mast would detain such a man for very long! And now he wished for the peace of his friend, Captain McKinney, who had traveled all around the known Earth, in peace, for he had never harmed a soul in the world!

"Whut's wrong, Cap'n?" Cindahr cried.

"We're going the wrong way." He spoke, looking to the cloud decks, aloft.

What is it like to be so eternally lost on earth for justice? What is it like to be 'an enemy of the people' so much that no matter where he went, no amount of justice served could ever pay off his dues - such were his crimes!!! Could only a noose rightfully could finish off the chase? Though he became his own free prince, the tide of time had changed and he had now had to flee himself! He had fallen off the world! He was beyond them now, beyond all redemption..he was beyond the very world! A chantee went through his head, he'd heard once as a kid:

*We can all be forgiven by God,
For mercy is a quality, hath He.
Still dues, on land,
Must be paid - to man!!
Or to the trenches of the Sea!*

Eastward Haul

Rene, seeing Edith's wretched weakness, had been sneaking her food and sometimes some of their savage grog, and thus she sat partially obscured by the strong ale and partially transfixed by the captain. Day after day, she sat all alone in the afternoon sunbeams that snuck their way in her little hut, she could hear him giving orders on the deck at times. And she cried out to him! She pounded on the bulkhead. God, she missed him, missed teaching him, she even missed his relentless teasing! She missed the thunderbolts that went through her heart every time she set eyes upon him for the first moment of the day! Even if it were all such a big lie, she did miss it! He did seem to enjoy himself.

Later he had Captain McKinney brought up for tea and the two captains faced each other across the table squarely.

Captain McKinney told himself "I just can see no reason to continue on the Eastward course, having mended all rigging splintered in the attack, and, plus, there are few treasure ships out here in the open ocean. Captain La Fourche could now boldly sail back into most contentious waters westwards to the treasure, and so he finally said:"

"I haven't seen Madame Edith in a week or so, Captain. Is she alright?"

"I am still confining her to quarters."

"For what reason, sir?"

"Mutiny." He said softly.

"Mutiny! Captain, surely no! She's not your crew Captain."

Captain La Fourche refused to budge and so he asked: "And, we're still heading East, sir?"

"Yessir." Captain La Fourche looked down at his tea. He trusted this man, his prisoner deeply, for some reason and he decided to tell him the full story: "Madame is not cooperating with us about Captain Lawless's treasure. We're moving onto other lucrative targets."

"Into the Eastern Atlantic. The Azores? Europe? The Med?" These were not so far from England! He was hopeful as he asked.

"No." Captain gave McKinney a leveling, sober look.

"Where, then, sir?"

"The Indian Ocean."

Captain McKinney let out a terrible, anguished groan! "Aaaaaaaawwwwww!" and he slapped his hands over his eyes! The boy flinched, too, for, he'd never seen a grown man cry! All the rest of the crew on deck froze around him, stunned.

And Daniel had flinched too and then sighed: "I know, Geoffrey, you want to get back to your family...and, truly, I am terribly sorry to detain you for so long."

The man had put his head in his hands, shaking. And Daniel swallowed bitterly as he watched Captain McKinney silently weep. It was all her fault! This Captain was too fine a man to be degraded into tears of anguish, by this spinster!! He cussed Edith

inwardly and then he poured Captain McKinney a glass of rum, who took it gratefully. And he took a big shot himself.

"I haven't seen my new son in three years! He should be about five years old now! I have no idea how he even looks!" he drank up.

"I'm sorry, Captain."

"My wife – I can't even recall what she looks like! If I passed her on the pier, would I even recognize her?" he swallowed another gulp, heavily. "Maybe they've declared me 'Lost at Sea!' Perhaps she has married another by now!"

"Surely she hasn't, sir." Cap'n poured him another.

After he set down the glass, he tried to compose himself before the pirate captain, who watched him intently from across the table. He cleared his throat which was hoarse. He was acting way beneath himself - like a man completely without Faith!! He decided to chock his anguish and shake himself out of it and he tried to talk, but his voice choked up; his throat felt strangled.

"Go on, Geoffrey."

He quaffed a shot and cleared his thick throat, again. "Captain, surely there must be some other way to persuade Madame to cooperate!"

"I've tried it all: money, gold, fortune, romance – and now, she is tasting our dark side; this is all her choice."

He gestured for Capt McKinney to follow him up to the main deck, and there he stood; pointing forward:

"Look at where she sits, day after day after day, in the heat, with little food."

He looked upon the forlorn little cook's shack on the bow, aft of the galley.

"I truly believe she is the most stubborn person I have ever met." Said the indomitable captain.

"Indeed!"

He watched the compartment for sometime and finally said:

"Perhaps I can talk to her."

"Don't think it'll work, Captain McKinney – she already believes heavily in what she is doing. It'd be hard to pull her off *that* course."

"I have thought of that and, perhaps I have an angle on it."

"Really? What is it?"

"Well, before I tell you, I first would like to make a deal with you, Captain." He gestered to go back to the greatroom.

"Let's go back down."

"A deal, Captain McKinney? I don't usually make deals – with anyone!"

"Please just listen, sir, that's all I ask."

He followed the captain down the companionway and back into the great room. Cap'n poured him another shot of rum.

He smiled. "You want to go home, of course." And handed Captain McKinney him the shot glass.

"Yes, Captain, but there is another consideration." And he hesitated.

"What's that, Geoffrey? Would you like some extra compensation for your time aboard our ship? That I would gratefully do for your company has been most excellent – especially considering that you are my prisoner!"

"I'm afraid I am rather like Ms. Edith, in that respects, Captain, I cannot touch blood money."

"What is it then?"

"I want you to give up piracy. That's it. That's the deal. That's all I want for my help."

"..."

"That is the cost I seek for my help."

"Well, I can no longer go back." Cap'n said, looking around as if overlooking the ocean, all about him.

"With an immense fortune you can disappear into the backwoods of the New World and never be seen again."

"They'd hunt me..."

"They'd still hunt you out here."

"I can flee easily out here." But, then, he involuntarily glanced out the great windows for the fleet of six ships hunting somewhere behind him.

"You could pass yourself off easily as an Englishman, Daniel, thanks to your tutor, you really could reinvent yourself, on land."

"I've done too much time on this tack."

"Surely, no!"

"Six souls have I on my head, not counting whom I've marooned, nor whom my mates killed, nor whom went down with their ships!"

"How many ships?"

"Fifty-six, nay, shoot, now fifty-seven ships have we attacked and ransacked."

"A dreadful number indeed!" said McKinney as evenly as he could, "to carry upon one's heart." He said, though the Cap'n's eyes were upcast to the sounds of mates on the deck, above. Was this a confession? Was he trying? Was he turning?

"Do you really want to go on like this, Daniel? Year after year - after year - after year?"

He shrugged. "I'm too bad. It's too late!"

"It's never too late!"

"..." he shrugged.

"Think about it a while, Daniel. It's high time for a change!"

"How would you trust me? I could lie to your, Geoffrey and promise you the moon, that I'd change, and then go right back to piracy."

"You sure could. But, then there is your word, Daniel, as your friend, keep your word to me."

"I am nothing but a bastard!"

"But even the fatherless can find honor."

"..."

"Daniel, think of it as your first step back into civilization."

"You're wasting your breath on a pirate like Daniel La Fourche."
"But, aye, Captain, even he can be redeemed."

Twenty one years he'd been out here! And he wondered away, in a daze, away from Captain McKinney and went topside, to look outwards to the stern, where an enormous albatrosses had always seem to follow them, so faithfully. He had twenty one years, in exile from land! It was an exodus, and a burden, when, he had not wanted to be in the Royal Navy in the first place! He'd been on the docks in Bristol, looking for his father's ship, when a gang from the crew of *HMS Minster* had kidnapped him aboard! He'd been impressed into service into the Royal Navy at age sixteen! He had only wanted to escape all that! And to be fatherless! It was simple: he was a bastard - and - thus, he had become a pirate!

But now a new choice was clearly charted directly before him.

And could he go back? Was he doomed to be out here for the rest of eternity? He had not pondered his fate in some time, having simply accepted the judgment of another man's wrongdoing upon his life, a course which only lead downwards. And now the question had been put boldly before him: Could he really get away?

In his eyes ware a vision, of the first man who had died at his hands in a seabattle - and all the sorrow had returned. Too many misdeeds to count! Too, too many! He was so bad that he had become an enemy of the whole world and now he was doomed to the gallows - aye, and even way beyond that - to the very gates of hell itself!

And he turned and walked away.

But later that very night in the hollowing winds of yet another terrible storm Captain La Fourche, lost the battle of his pride and he said simply to the lightening-lit clouds:

"Okay, You win, have it Your way."

Her Treasure

Inside the miserable hut, on the deck, Edith sat for days repeating to herself words that gold was no treasure to her at all! Her treasure was crafted from this one line straight from Genesis itself: "You desire shall be *for* your husband." That was it! Not gold, not jewels! That was her treasure that she was born to cherish what she was cursed to not have! God had lately become a hateful, vengeful God! He hated her and had created her ugly.

No man, especially a man of the Sea, could know of such inlets and coves on the coast of a womans' soul; no man, but in went Captain McKinney, anyway.

He knocked and then slowly opened the door and was stunned to see her too stricken and to arise and immediately gave her the food and drink that Captain La Fourche had allowed him to bring. "Madame Edith!"

She woozily sat up and tore into the bread and gobbled out: "Pardon my manners, Captain."

"No! Don't worry! Please eat well!!"

Several minutes went by as she gobbled the rough bread that fell in crumbles all over her lap for she was too shaky to eat properly. She gathered them up in her palm and shoved them in her mouth, roughly.

"I'm glad to see you have a good appetite, Madame!"

"Ten days without much food, sir!" she gobbled out.

"I am so sorry about that Madame! I did what I could."

"Thank you Captain." She said, still eating ravenously and drinking. Why couldn't she have a husband like him? What was so wrong with her? It had been *the question* of her entire life and, aye, of many a husbandless woman. Well, if she was so darn ugly, why go on?

"Aaaaaawww." Much better she said about ten minutes later. It had taken her that long to chew through the hard tack, which was as tough as any as leather belt!

"You heard where we're headed, correct?"

"Yessir."

"All the way around the Cape Horn of Africa, Edith."

"Yes." She humped over in defeat.

"Don't you realize that we might not *ever* get back." He chided.

"Yes!! But, I don't know what to do about it, Geoffrey! He won't talk to me anymore!"

"I think if you show that you're going to be reasonable with him, he'll treat you well, Edith."

"..."

"Edith this treasure does not have to be heisted on the high seas! It simply has to be dug-up – no attacks, nothing. Think of it as an historical dig, even."

She nodded, but still shamefaced she said: "Do you think he could have simply just asked me for the damn treasure map and not done all that romance tomfoolery!! He could have simply just asked me for it! That's the only thing that was bothering me all along!! The only thing! Fie! For shame!"

Captain McKinney smiled back warmth into this scene – he suddenly saw what she really struggled with: it was all about shame!

“It probably didn’t occur to him that you would help him without all that flowery talk and romance.”

“Yes, but now there’s been all this flowery stuff and now, I’m very much ashamed of even listening to it for one second! All he wanted was the treasure!”

“I understand, you’re very embarrassed.”

“Yes I am!!” she stamped her foot. “He didn’t mean it for one second! All he wanted was the gold!”

“He’s going to quit piracy, Edith. The gold can help him get away for good.”

She shook her head. “I don’t believe he will, Captain McKinney!”

“If he gets this treasure, he can at least try to start a new life. At least give him a chance to, Edith. Can you show a man like him mercy?”

“Mercy! Certainly! Just don’t make ME eat shame for the trade off!”

“Aye! I understand you now.”

She sighed, hushed and beaten, whimpering, whispering, and almost against her iron will she said: “Can a man like him love a plain ol’ woman like me?”

“I don’t know Edith. Captain La Fourche has lived a very visceral and worldly life - probably many ladies have fallen under his spell and I don’t quite blame them – he truly is an extraordinary man.”

She sighed at the truth put so straight before her - even Captain McKinney thought of her as plain. She swallowed her heavy lot in life. There was little magic or warmth left of her life left. She was dull, plain and uninteresting. She gave up. Anyway, there was nothing to be done but agree to help him, given this emissary obviously sent by the Captain, and thus, she nodded her head.

“Okay, then, Capt McKinney, I will help him because simply for your sake and the sake your family.”

“Thank you, Edith. May I tell him what you just said?”

“Yes Captain McKinney.” She said bowing from her rack.

Oui

When Captain McKinney came out of Edith's little hut, on the deck, the entire deck crew froze in their tracks; and others, perched up in the rigging like spiders, gawked from high above. With no small measure of satisfaction, Captain McKinney looked up to them and simply nodded his head 'Yes' and everyone was so delighted that entire ship's watch broke out in clapping! Leonard slid all the way down the running rigging, landing on the deck with a dash, to shake his hand; while others began singing a sailors' hymn: "*A Prayerwatch for the Young Sailor, Lad*" high up in the rigging and on the spars way overhead, bow to stern:

*O don't ye war with the Sea,
My lad,
For she as mighty empress, see?
Take off ye hat and understand,
Don't war with the Sea,
As ye have, on land!*

He stood there enjoying their song for a while. Like many birds in trees overhead, they all were proficient singers. And, they were so intune with the little drama at the very heart of the ship - of their Captain - and, how much all their fates were wrapped up in it! He admired their carefree seasongs, which showed how childlike they were on days like these, when they were lead simply and easily. And yet, on other days, they were ferocious monsters and their spirit was one of the wild roaring Sea: who was always kicking up murderous ship-breakers in her backwaters! The pirates were really beyond him; they were, like the orcas, the mighty hunters of the open oceans - and they had hunted all the Seas! And, he knew once he got home that they'd haunt him as well! He'd never forget them and would try to stop others from this life - once he got home. He swallowed - he had such faith that he never wavered even in his thoughts, for he never once thought 'if he'd get home' but 'when he got home!' and when he got home he'd always think of them eternally at Sea!

"God save Captain McKinney!" Michaels cried.

He bowed to them. And they cheered him.

And then went aft to see the Captain.

He knocked on the door, and waited for a moment. The Captain was a sound sleeper, so he let himself in and found the Captain deeply asleep, breathing heavily, face down on his rack, his hair strewn all about his back, as if he had just fallen there, for he noticed Daniel had been distressed since he had sent Edith away and because of this Captain McKinney had a sense that the pirate captain had been listening to him, afterall.

"Captain, Captain..." He had to shake his arm, "Captain La Fourche. Captain La Fourche... Daniel..." And Cap'n awoke up with difficulty seeing Geoffrey standing

there, in double. He forced himself to push himself up and swung his legs to the floor and rubbed his eyes until they focused and said, roughly: "You have news already?"

Captain McKinney smiled his answer back and the other Captain looked up and shook his head, but then smiling "Perhaps there are miracles after all! I might just try out that gospel 'thing' of yours!" He stretched. "What did you tell her? How did you accomplish this?"

"Well, I simply told her you're giving up piracy, Daniel."

He sighed at that and tried to focus.

"Do you think she's really going to help us?"

"Yessir, I do."

"Really?" He jumped up and got out his shaving basin.

Captain McKinney put a hand on his shoulder firmly. "Captain La Fourche, one word of advice."

"Yes?"

"Please - *just* be kind to her. She's just really ashamed of the romantic approach you took - you know - with the romance books."

"She's going to help pirates out, then?"

"Yes, she wants to help you leave piracy behind. She was just ashamed of the *way* you went about it - the romance blarney from the books - That's *all* this fuss was about; says you should have just asked her outright for the map and she would have given it to you."

"Why should she be ashamed?"

"Because she thinks you didn't meant it. She's deeply embarrassed at the romance stuff."

But Cap'n smiled most richly, looking up to him, while pulling on his boots.

"But, I *always* mean it."

Captain McKinney sighed - it was such a consummate act, that it was hard to argue the point.

"You don't believe me Geoff, do you?"

"No, sir."

Captain got up and changing shirts and he leaned forwards, smiling while buttoning his clean blouse: "But, I always mean it, with the lay-dies!" He winked with a bow. The Captain had such charm and charisma that McKinney could see clearly what storms Edith really faced!

"Well then, go easy on her sir." He suggested, with his hand out.

"We'll give it one more shot!" Daniel said and poured on the cologne. He whistled his "Sailor Joe Mallone." And he spun his mustache into dashing twists.

He ordered René to give Edith toiletries to wash up and she cleaned up for more than an hour: changing her threadbare dress for her newer dress, given to her by her last employer, which now fit her quite well. She brushed her long wet hair nervously - she was about to see the Captain again. "Oh, he probably hates me!" she thought. "Well, now at least he'll behave and be his self again without all that flattery!" She felt

so damn plain that she wouldn't even admit to liking all that flowery talk. As she braided her hair, she finally decided to be cold and aloof and just get this thing over with. She actually put on her hidden gold earrings. Maybe one day - if she could ever just get home to Boston, she could certainly write about all this, and, as she walked aft, she even thought of a title: "*Two Years Prisoner of Pirates!*" It would become a stunning bestseller and then perhaps she could get grand employer out of it, which would be well worth all this trouble! Anyways!

She knocked on the door lightly and Chandler uttered "Come in." She opened it slowly. Chandler was holding a tray out before them, serving them lunch. She came in very timid and curtsied before him and said straight out before anyone could greet her: "I was wrong, Captain, to keep Captain McKinney from his wife and family. I will be fully cooperative from now on. I apologize for my bad behavior." And she bowed a little before them.

"Are you sure, Edith?" Cap'n said stopped sipping his tea and giving her a cold stare. During lunch he had gotten in a bad mood just thinking of Captain Jenkins just behind him and the obvious betrayal of *The Pink Lady* with him and he was still brimming with the sheer annoyance with all women. Why did men have to have women in their lives anyway! They are nothing but fluff!

"Yessir, you have my word on this one."

"I'm *trusting* you Edith." He warned, his eyes large and threatening. He could lead a crew of pirates with those eyes alone!

"Yessir!"

"If you mess up again, the crew will *not* tolerate it again!" He said, fork in his hand, gesturing emphatically.

"Yessir, I know!" she said nodding her head vigorously.

"Only *I* have been the one holding them back!" And he pounded the table with his fist and fork! And the drinks jumped and spilled a little bit; good thing it was a sturdy table.

She had jumped too. "Yessir, I know that now!"

"Chandler." He said gesturing him with the fork. "Go tell the Second Mate to jibe her all about and set a new course, North by North-West, for St Jameston Island."

"Aye! Aye! Captain!" the boy said, popping up, smartly.

Cap'n peared at her intently; his eyes dropping down all her form. She was a twitching, wild little rabbit and she could feel his eyes undressing her right there.

And, well there were worse faults than to have a man like that - a most magnificently made man - seduce her with his eyes alone!! And, in that instant, she had caught a whiff of his deep, musky cologne and mysteriously a sly little smile, somehow, spread upon her face.

And her smile charmed him so, for, in that instant he knew that he was no longer doomed! Here was this innocent, genteal lady and she was really going to help him! Her genuine desire to free him had made him suddenly so hopeful and happy!

'I'm gonna get that gold and get away from all of this!' he promised himself right then and there, clenching his fist under the table, to himself "I promise myself! And he glanced out the porthole to the blue sky "and I promise You, too."

And he said heartily: "Enough of this mess! Eat! And then I want my romance-book-English lessons!" And everybody burst out laughing, including Miss Edith, with gigantic, continental relief, and she immediately plopped down and dug into the chow. Mercy was a quality hath he!

He had been watching her as they ate; from her forced fast 'in the brig' she had taken off unsightly puffiness and had a thin narrow waste. She had a pretty, and tight fitting new dress on and jewelry. She had parted and braided her hair to the side in a becoming angle. She had changed somehow, he thought.

As the ship began to lean-to in her heavy course change, they had to hold on as they ate and he regaled them all amusing stories of past shipmates and the many exotic places that they had been and they enjoyed a relief to the tension. He was genuinely enjoying telling her his favorites stories - and showing off to a woman who had no guile, nor pretensions for any of his gold, no fluff.

"...then there was Salty, Edith, he was this guy from the Isle of Man, we came across the wild Indians and he bought his old lady home a shrunken human head!" "and then there ware Landers, me mate of the Derry, who made ale from Indian corn..." and then there was this storm, set on the squalls lee to the islands..."

Then boy cleared away the plates.

"Well?" he said after they ate.

She nodded and then looked around at everyone abashed and turned around in her chair for privacy and began to remove the hanky from deep between her bosom.

Captain smile wide at her, but she avoided his wide-open eyes with dexterous and skilled lady-like manners. Touché!

She flattened it out on the table and began to point out in great detail the contents of it with a pen, as Captain La Fourche took many notes and questioned her at length:

"Is this a big river?"

"Not much more than a stream but, it's in a deep ravine."

"What are these angles here?"

"These are mountains, sir."

"Mountains!? How far inland is this place?"

"About a half day journey."

"How did Captain Lawless move the treasure way in there!?"

"Well, he had a small cow onboard and they hitched her to a cart and he still had to bring a five strong men to help her pull it up with a yoke."

He was so glad he'd found this map in Edith, he never would have looked in the mountains for it! But, by gawr it was far in!

"We don't have any cows, Edith."

"I think you'll need to have at least ten men to haul it out on their backs."

"Anymore nonsense, Edith?"

"No sir, I have given you every detail that I personally saw for myself on that island."

"You might have saved yourself a lot of trouble in the last two weeks, Edith. I still mean to honor my agreement to pay both you and Captain McKinney, your fair share. And, if you won't take it, I will at least bring you to a place where you can find passage back to Savannah."

"Yessir." She bowed. "I judged you wrong."

"And to that handsome Wentworth guy..." he teased.

But she just looked down at her lap.

"Will you please excuse us, Geoffrey?" Captain said, getting up from the table and gesturing for Chandler to leave as well.

"Sir, I must say one thing – do nothing to dishonor her. Promise me you will be a gentleman with her."

"That's not what she wants, is it Edith?" he smiled, hand on his hip.

"I – I..."

"Captain, please..."

She noticed then, that the Captain had dressed in his fine clothes, too! Again, she smiled and Captain McKinney's eyebrows shot up into his hair line.

"You wooooo-rrrrry too much, Geoffrey." And Cap'n put his hand over Captain McKinney's shoulder escorting him towards the hatch and Chandler scurried off with them. "Look, Madame's been teaching me chivalry all this toime!"

"Madame, are you okay with this?" Captain McKinney asked, nervously, over his shoulder already pushed out in the companionway hall.

Though wildly scared, she timidly nodded, and Captain shut the hatch and, there she had him all to herself! She could scarcely believe it!!

The compartment was now filled with the rose-hue of the deep afternoon sun and their eyes met from across the space.

"You look so scared, Madame."

She nodded.

"What happened to that wildly obstinate woman who would rather starve herself to death, than help to save a pirate crew?"

"I..."

He strode up to her, his head cocked to the side, like one highly amused and interested, and he grabbed her hands. She was so unlike *The Pink Lady* and he thoroughly enjoyed her complete lack of guile!

"No fluff, okay?" And he kissed her well.

"Hmmm???" she said breathless. "What does that word mean Captain?"

"Mon amour. Je suis tres fatigued! Mon belle fille, mon dame blanche."

"What did you say?" French, a language for lovers! Goosebumps popped on her arms. This move wasn't in any of the romance books!

"J'attend au jour d'hui!" *You have helped me escape all this darkness and doom, m'lady, love!*" "Toujours merci, toujours!"

"What are you saying to me?"

"A lot."

"Really? What?"

"Merci, mon amour, merci." He smiled ravenously at her.

"What do you intend to do with me now Captain?"

"What do you think I'm going to do, Edith?" he was totally enjoying his game again, and his eyes dilated wide.

"I - I don't know. I don't know what to think!" She blushed.

But, then she looked up to face him.

"Captain..." she said gittery.

"Come." And, as they stood there, he undid her hair bun.

"Nice!" He said, and then he kissed her there! She could feel his heart beating.

"Okay, I want you." She eclipsed, breathless and fell into his chest.

He only smiled back. She grabbed him tightly to her.

"No, what you want is *romance!*" He laughed at her, but still he held her tight.

But she countered: "No, what I want is a man's heart..."

"..."

"...and a man's name."

"Come, my dear, you'd have to travel way too far, for that!"

"Why do you say that?"

"I've got to go very far away - now."

"Does that mean you'll try to get away from all this lunacy, Daniel?"

He smiled back and kept his treasures to himself.

"A man's heart and name - It's all I've ever wanted." She reiterated.

He kissed her.

"Everything else is meaningless." '*Meaningless, meaningless... like the chasing of the winds.*' Ecclesiastes...

"With a good fortune, Edith, you will find very eager suitors."

"They would want my purse; not my heart!"

"You judge them too harshly, Edith, for we all want a better life. With a fortune, you will have many eager suitors because you'll have a very wonderful life to offer them. Love is all economics; not this romance fluff."

"What happened to feelings?"

"Feelings go well with money - and lots of it!"

"I don't believe you, Captain."

"Suit yourself then." And he was kissing her again.

"But, this is against my upbringing."

"What is?"

"This..." but he was around her again and she was falling on in. It was the most triumphant thing that had ever happened to her - to hold such a masterful man as was he, and she eagerly held him and touched him and felt a part of him. He really

belonged to another time and place, for, this piracy was injustice to the greatness he really had! He was a prince! *She could finally look beyond his piracy and, lo, what a catch was he!!*

"Okay, Edith, it's time to go -- otherwise Captain McKinney will think we're being *naughty*." He said pulling back but still holding her.

"You mean we're not..."

"That's roight, I promised him. Ye heard me, y'self."

"But, now, I *do* want you to..."

"I know, gurl!" He smiled richly and it was a most magnificent smile, he was drinking her on in, as if he treasured her, as only in her most private dreams. It was real!!

And she didn't feel scorned at all, in fact, she felt the aura of chivalry and respect coming from him, instead - oh, my! She thought dizzily!

"You really have nice hair." And he twirled her long plaits around his index finger, while holding her there. "Still feel like I'm acting, Edith? Still feel like I'm only after the treasure map?"

"No." his honor towards her made him unimaginably desirable! He was not a lying, cavorting man, afterall, but an honorable prince, if only miscast with this lot. Wow! An uncovered treasure! He was going to be a gentleman with her, after all, and this had truly amazed her! This was a most unexpected turn in the story! Her head was spinning with this most bejeweled find!

"Me mother - excuse me - my mother - she taught me to be always a gentleman to the ladies - *tourjours*." He explained. "I might be a pirate, Edith but, I am a gentleman..." and she actually believed him despite all the teasing of the romances!

He glanced out the great room window; evening had fallen and the moon was out and "Ah, the m-moooooon!" he said, smiling again - a smile that had led men ferociously into battle, of the Royal Navy in Kingston Bay or to take a sudden trek across the Atlantic and 'round the Cape of Good Horn of Africa on just a whim. He led her to under the window. "Sorry it can't be on the quarterdeck, *gurl*, but, then, no man can do that."

"Really? Why, Captain?" More fabulous men-mystery. And men had such different ways than women! She wondered, mystically, why that was. They both baffled and amazed her, in one breath, and she'd lost the battle of her heart! As the moon arose over the waters, he held her a long time, from behind, and kissed her ears and the nape of her neck and she just reveled in his grasp - all up and down her spine! A tremendous thing had happened here. She had been reborn as a woman.

"Will you really give up piracy, Daniel?" she said nestled there in his arms there.

"With a great fortune like St. Jameston's, I just might be able to. It's all economics!" she both heard and felt his words rumble through his chest.

"I hope you do, Daniel."

"Thanks, Edith, that's about the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me." He kissed the top of her head.

"You don't belong with them." She said looking backwards and up at him, "They're not sophisticated, they're not honorable like you... They're '*The Rabble*...'"

He laughed and looked out the great cabin windows. "I've been thrown with them since age sixteen."

"Really?"

"They call it 'impressment of seaman' - sounds so legal and lawful, doesn't it, Edith? But the real word for it is 'KIDNAPPING!'"

"I thought that was only allowed in the Royal Navy."

"Well, I was *in* the Royal Navy!"

"What?"

"Don't you remember that I told you I was kidnapped to Sea?"

"Yes, but that was the Royal Navy, that did that to you?"

"Yes, Edith. They "Impressed" into service in Bristol at age 16. I've been out to Sea ever since."

"How old are you now?"

"Thirty-Seven. Twenty one years to Sea!"

"That's a lifetime, already, out to Sea!"

Man, I'm going to go to land for a long while!

She was beaming at him. "You are most interesting person, indeed, Daniel."

"Most of us were forced into this life, Edith, either by poverty, orphaning, bad debts, bad business turns or - by crime!"

"Really? You're kidding me! The crew was impressed, too? The Rabble?"

"Yes, many of them Edith. The Navy is a most savage way to sail! Most of us jumped ship in the New World, non-the-least, me!"

"You should tell me the whole story sometime, Daniel."

"I could write a book." He mused, putting his boot was on the sill and he was spinning his moustache, thoughtfully. "What tales *I* could tell!"

"Why don't you, your English has improved."

"You could write it for me, Edith." He laughed again "...and he takes her in his *manly* arms under the m-m-moooooon!" he lampooned, grabbing her again for another savage kiss. All was right in the world and he merrily kissed her there.

"You're the very devil!" she laughed in his arms, radiant, and, she *was* beautiful.

"I had the most fun with those!"

"I thought you were attacking me."

"No, that was just pure *fun!*" his nose wrinkled and how he laughed, long and loud and threw in more quotes verbatim from the books and they both held their stomachs they had laughed so hard. And she forgave him of each and every thing he'd *ever* do! And, she'd never be the same no more!

And, a few minutes later, he called Captain McKinney back on in, who was most pleasantly surprised to find that all conditions were still rather honorable - although Edith was blushing and her long hair was down to her hips! He noted, suddenly, that she had become truly beautiful! Captain La Fourche had seen something in her that no one else - even herself - had; and he had been telling the truth, after all!

He nodded in encouragement to her, and, before he could even think, he had kissed the hand of Madame Edith, as he had walked back on into the compartment.

"Now you're becoming a charmer just like Captain La Fourche!" She jested merrily.

"Madame, you look beautiful."

"Thank you, Sir!" And tinkles went up and down her spine!

And then, together, the two Captains and O'Shea, Faerburne, Cindahr and Corporal Dennison sat down and made detailed, tactical plans for the capture of the treasure on St Jameston's Spit.

The Third Battle of *The Vantage*

They had returned to the same latitude and longitude where they had last seen their foes, *The Vantage* and Captain had Corporal Dennison back up on deck to advise him, for the Marine was rather forthcoming in all sorts of details of the ship.

Cap'n was very weary of these waters, and return to the civilized world! It was either this or the long journey back to the Indian Ocean – two unfoundably difficult choices. But this one, at least, had certain treasure - and behind it and the vast forests of the New World to the great big West – the great, untamed primal west to escape into. It offered him a refuge, and so he bravely faced *The Vantage* once again! It was the only way away!

He did have one big advantage: Captain Jenkins of *The Vantage* would not be expecting him back in those waters so soon. Such a drastic course turnabout, for, their ways were not based on the whims of a woman! He'd sail boldly back upon them, that's what he'd do, and, so, he posted his sharpest watches as they sailed near the last location of their enemy. The kid, so loyal, he chose again, was one of them.

In the bright haze, the next day, the kid, once again, first saw their foes! "Sail HO! He cried out and this time the boy didn't skylark up on the mast but came swiftly down the mast like a jungle monkey!

"Same ship Chandler?" O'Shea was asking.

"I think so." The kid said, still shaking from his sudden descent, he wish he'd checked it out further to be sure. But he'd had a bad experience, last time, of ending up 'in the drink' as they say. But it turned out that it was the same ship and Captain shouted "General Quarters! Arm up! Everyone arm up! Gunner Mead! Ready your men!"

"Aye, Captain!!" The Gunner cried, and he turned and barked orders to his detail, who followed him down the ladder and into the cannonade.

The Boatswain blew his pipe and all were flying about the deck once again! She scurried out on deck "Captain, what's wrong?"

"Edith, go below decks and lay down next to the keel! Keep safe!" he told her.

"Thar's going to be a battle!"

"Please be careful, Daniel!" she cried.

"Okay! Okay!" and he was pushing her towards the ladder. "Go!"

"Check it out, Captain!" O'Shea was pointing. "Their mast is not up yet!"

He grabbed the scope from him. "Good, we'll just by-pass it then!"

"Let's shoot her out of the water first!" the First Mate cried.

"We are low in ammo, O'Shea!"

"We'll grab ammo from them!"

"Are you drunk again! They have three rows of canons on both sides! You don't remember the last fight, do you!! We barely got away! They can shoot us out of the water!!"

"But if we hit her now, we'll have no pursuers later!"

"We have no choice! I don't want to go to St. Jameston and get the treasure and have nothing to defend it with! We'll stock up at St Jameston's Island."

"Do they have gunpowder there, Captain?"

"If not we'll head for New Orleans after."

"New Orleans!" O'Shea spat on the deck, for, he wanted right back on the Spanish Main! "The Crew wants to go home - to Port Royal!!"

He turned to stare the First Mate in the face, stunned. His mate was going mad - mad with the drink!! Mad with grief! O'Shea was going mad!

"Marcus..." he began softly and most carefully. "Did ye not remember the words of Captain Janvier, Port Royal is gone."

"tis not! I daren't believe him! Surely some of me girls, me kids and me things are safe! I must go back! We - we of the crew - we *must* go back home!"

"Okay, first to New Orleans to arm up!"

"And then you'll jump ship there, Daniel!"

"Marcus!"

Captain was the only one who could navigate so well and he knew it. Marcus needed him!

Marcus pupils dilated in inner rage. "Take us to Port Royal or I'll kill you!"

He stared into his eyes first the first time, realizing that he was staring into the very eyes of a madman! The Mate was leading his crew down a path of treachery!

"You're Mad!"

"We will vote - Captain! We will vote on this matter!"

"Aye - and I agree to a votel! But Marcus, surely you must know that there are six Navy ships after us and Port Royal is the very first place they will go to look!"

But the First Mate gave him a wild look - a tattered and mad and wild glance. Drink was claiming the better half of his mind! Torment and loss and something else - some wild bit of madness or mischief - he was going down!

"We'll discuss this later!" and he swore to himself in a most private bout of terror, that, by telling O'Shea of his New Orleans dreams, that he now might have a spawned a mutiny upon his head - led by his own deranged First Mate!!

He was determined gave *The Vantage* a mock-attack - with Corporal Dennison's advice - enough to slow her down some more. He only hoped that that light attack would fool Captain Jenkins, but he was sure it would not halt him for very long.

He was studying her, carefully. "Gunner! Gunner!"

"Yessir!" he came running up to the quarterdeck.

"Let's not get carried away with this attack - No more than two salvos, okay? I want to slow her down enough, without running out of our own shot."

"Yessir!"

"So wait until you hear my call – And, make sure it's MY call - and we'll hit her up close and high and damage another mast, hopefully!"

"Aye, Aye! Cap'n!"

"Only try to knock down a mast! Everything else is pure folly!"

Captain climbed back up the main mast, with the glass tucked under his sling, and he saw that the enemies' main mast, that he had knocked down earlier, in the second battle, was being outfitted as a backup mast, and the carpenter on the deck had already laid a new one, already refitted for its replacement! To his horror, he could see them climbing the rigging, en force, and dropping sail and a while later he could see that they could make headway with just two masts! In fact, they were turning to their side, already, like a scorpion does to swing its stinger at you. This was a dangerous foe! And he was climbing down the mast as fast as he could!

"They're turning-to, Cap'n!!!" Miller cried!

"I know it!"

As they came closer and closer he could now hear their boatswain pipe - and Dennison told him that this pipe call meant that they had armed fully and were awaiting!

Closer they inched, the tension rising! Closer!

"Closer!" he ordered and they were bracing the sails.

At three ships distance, *The Vantage* was almost broadsides now!

"Fire!" he cried!

And then a dreadful "BBBOOOOOOMMM!" came from his ship and tore threw *The Vantage*'s sails and smoke filled the Seas like a fog bank!

He struggled to see them suddenly "Damn!" he cried. They were suddenly hard to see in the smoke, suddenly! The wind had swept around them, like a cocoon. They had set off an incindary! They were coming about in the midst and he was fiercely gripping the spyglass – the last salvo he had left – it had to make its mark! He could just feel the noose twisting around his neck!

Then the Sea arose and assisted him and he cried: "Fire!" again and the jib boom splintered of *The Vantage*.

"Let's get the hell out of here! Course one-eight-zero!" and Scupper spun the helm round and the ship leaned-to in the heavy swell and right into the range of the shooters and they swiped right past them. Cap'n ducked beneath the recess of the ladder-well, for cover, but through the gunwhale he could see the battle ensue! They shot back, while he searched for Captain Jenkins. Suddenly he could see him also taking cover in their ladder-well also. The man stared at him right through the struts on the gunwhale! He looked just as he had remembered him, from many years ago – his bald head, his beady blue eyes!

"Cease Fire!" Captain Jenkins screemed out, on a horn, and *The Vantage* ship shooters stopped and they all could hear him scream:

"I'll get you Daniel La Fourche! I'll get you - if it's the last thing I do!"

The winds pushed them out of range, again, and he sat there on the ladder-well steps, exhausted! Soon they were flying away on their course.

"Hurray, Captain!" Chandler cried.

"Don't celebrate so soon!" Cap'n cried "They have another two masts ready to go right up!"

Brooding Seas

The Captain was pacing the poop deck for three continuous days as they approached the island. He could sit still no longer and she came upon the deck and stood by his side.

"You look anxious, Captain."

"I am."

"What's wrong?"

He looked around and then said quietly, "We haven't enough ammunition for a good fight."

"Are they still after us, Daniel?"

"Yes, I know they are." And he looked, involuntarily, back aft.

But she could see no one, behind them.

"Where are they Captain?"

"Back thar...back thar." He said, haunted a chill in his voice and he broke out the glass again and studied aft Seas.

"Come get lunch, Captain." She said taking his arm and, unbelievably, she could lead him down to the great room, where René had already set his meal. She was taking care of him, now. He didn't seem to mind it too much.

"We'll be sighting the island tomorrow, sometime." He said.

"Yessir." She was pouring him tea.

"Then you'll take us to the treasure, right?"

"Yes, Daniel, of course I will." She said smiling, and he, for once, found himself believing in a woman - he must be getting desparate! There was only two women he had ever trusted in his life - his mother and his aunt, and how sorry he must be making them, as they looked down from heaven and saw his many wicked ways underneath them! She would be most sorry to see her bastard children fallow into great wickedness! His sisters, he wondered, aching for them, hoping he could one day return to there town in the New World bayous. Had they made it to their agreed-upon Promised Land, there?

After they ate, and the others went topsides he pulled out a key and unlocked the strongbox. "Here, Edith, in case something happens to me, you can make it back to Savannah." He held up the gold before her. He watched her sharply. How it moved her - not! He could plainly see. He jingled it before her to catch the rays of the sun and glitter its fortune before her, she shrugged - and he touched her hand - her indifference was real.

"But, I don't want to go to Savannah now!"

"Boston? New Orleans?"

"Keep me with you!" she pleaded, not unlike *The Pink Lady*.

"Look, just in case something happens, you'll have this insurance, okay?"

"Okay." She ceded, finally, bowing her head and accepting the jewels that he placed over her head and around her neck. He went back to his chair and pulled out his spy glasses to watch the clouds, ignoring her resolutely.

"Do you want any English lessons, Captain."

He shook his head.

"I've never seen you so moody. What's wrong, Daniel?"

"These are mutinous Seas." is all he would say. And he turned to her and said "Be en garde, Edith."

And he was moody, he folded his arms and shaking his head, he refused to talk to her all day long. But this was a man, she thought, and this is what men did when worried; and she was very glad she could be a part of his worries and, thus, part of his world, as well.

Mutiny!

A storm brewed and puffed and pushed them along to the island in the mist and Cap'n lay in his rack, thumbing through his reading assignment in the Psalms when Captain McKinney waved at him from his side of the cabin, with his fingers over his lips. He heard murmurs up on deck. He gestered to Cap'n to come over to his rack where he could hear them better.

Cap'n leaned over and listened - the crew was having a most secret meeting without him! He tore off his fine blouse and threw on an old tattered black shirt, sticking his loaded musket in his belt and put on some house shoes, and tied a scarf around his forehead and hair threw on a watch cap, he went to the hatch to go topsides.

"Good luck, Captain." Captain McKinney said.

He nodded and went topsides in the dark and listened and looked. It was his mad First Mate leading a meeting in the Focs'le and he turned and listened on in, noting who was going along with the meeting, or, who was just there.

He watched the First Mate talk from the back of the crowd. He was quite mad! He realized, for he was telling them of lost Port Royal, and how that once they get the gold that they should convince the captain to turn back to Port Royal - or else mutiny with him and the rest of the crew! Faerburne was with him! His own second mate! Cindahr scowled, but seemed with them! Both officers!

He went back to the cabin, choosing not to fight this battle right now - he'd wisely wait a little bit. He came in and sat down on his rack, and tore off his disguise. He sat there pondering this, meeting Geoffrey's eyes across the room. He felt so heavy!

"Everything okay, Captain?"

He shook his head 'No.' and he sat there, armed and awaiting. During that long vigil in the night, slowly his very loyal mates came over to his cabin, knocking ever so lightly on his door and he most guardedly let them come in, musket to their eyes.

The first one was Mortenson, Thank God!

"Captain, the First Mate might try to mutiny!! He just held a meeting in the focs'le!! He wants to go to Port Royal!" and Mortenson told him all about it. Cap'n wouldn't tell anyone that he had been to that very mutinous meeting, himself!

Slowly, thorough the night the others snuck over to his cabin and told him of the meeting, declaring their loyalty to him - it was at least half the crew that came, carefully, to tell him: René, Faerburne, Nico, Chandler, Lawrence, Billings, McDade, Muck, Dorry O'Mally, Corporal Dennison, Izzy, Cabbage and so on. But not Cindahr? McLean? Jeb? Shubash?

He pondered the First Mate deeply! Why would he want to go back to Port Royal! Why!! He had heard the Royal Marines words about a pursuit of six ships! His plans did not make sense at all! He was rabid - It was the only explanation! And, surely others in the crew saw this too! Besides the First Mate was not the leader that he was, nor was that he was sharp in navigation - only the Captain had that skill as highly honed! But there was something about the First Mate that lead the less

sophisticated sailors in the crew, like, Bruto and ‘Slop-Chest’ followed and it frightened him much! O’Shea did have brutal charisma! He had swayed half the crew!

He sighed deep into that night - the treasure was so very close now and Edith seemed like she was really going to lead them right to it! He was very close to getting away from this cursed life, for good if he could only catch up to Luc in Sprits’le Harbor! He was already twenty-five days delayed! The storm winds howled as he sat there all night, and Captain McKinney, so loyal to him, sat and didn’t read, staying alert with him all night.

Finally an hour before sunset he decided to turn in for two hours deep sleep, exhausted and depressed. He looked up to Geoffrey. “Thank you, Captain.”

“Just pray, Captain La Fourche. Just pray.”

“Why would God want to help a savage like me!”

“Try Him out! What do you have to loose!”

“Well...” but he was too tired to answer.

“Lay down, Captain La Fourche, I’ll keep watch out for you.” And he gave Geoffrey the pistol.

“Thank you!” he cried, overwhelmed, and he took a few gulps of rum and passed out on his rack, with his fingers still wrapped around the butt of his loaded musket, by his head.

He awoke the next morning with a start, and he gasped, pistol in hand, but looked over and found Captain McKinney still sitting up in his rack, alert, and still awatch. The man was amazing to him, he glanced at him as he struggled to wake up after only two hours deep sleep.

“Go back to sleep Captain, I am still a’watch.”

“I don’t understand you Captain, why you would want to help me.” He said, still laying down and yawning.

“Because you need a friend.”

“But I am your enemy, Captain McKinney, and your captor.”

“You only think that you are.”

“Am I not keeping you here, onboard?”

“No sir, you’re not.”

“Eh?” he was startled.

“I could have joined them last night, had I wanted to.” He pointed to the bulkhead to the place where they had put there ears to the side.

Cap’n was astonished. He was right!

“Why didn’t you then?”

“Because God tells us though St.Paul, ‘Slaves be loyal to your masters.’”

“But don’t you want to do everything you can to get back to your wife?”

“But, Captain La Fourche, I serve God *before* my wife.”

“I don’t understand you.” He said.

“Maybe one day you will - when you experience the joy it is to know God.”

“I am way too bad.”

"Sometimes the worst we are, the more we'll seek Him, Daniel." Captain answered and he smiled, saying "And He likes that well, indeed." And Daniel pondered his deep words, until, lulled back into a deep sleep, where he slept sound as a kid. And when he awoke, he awoke ready to pounce!

The Golden Islamorada

Finally the watch saw the little island, two days off. Smollet cried out, again:
 “Land HO!”
 “LAND HO, maties! LAND HO!”

St Jameston’s Island was a very green and jungly mountain stretched out before them.

Chandler hoped Captain La Fourche would let him go ashore! It had a looming and mountainous appearance, which gave it a brooding aura of mystery and magical enchantment. All hands just gazed at her, spooked as most sailors would be.

Someone had nicknamed this island ‘*Golden Islamorada*,’ which sounded enchanting to the boy. In the foc’sle, that night, they all told tales of sailors meeting up with Captain Lawless mysterious curse. For, they said, Captain Lawless’s had cursed the soul of any man who put a boot ashore in search of his gold!

And then there were the ‘Indians’, The Caribe, who were storied to be headhunters and cannibals, and whose black chants were repeated all the way back to pubs in Bristol.

“I ware a’standing nare six feet tall by this toime.” Shaw said, switching to the first person narration, again, accidentally, stroking the beard on his chin and then taking a swig. “I had gone upon the pirate account now for many months now. After listening to all that talk, without saying a word to anybody, I went below, to see Mr. Mortensen, the Master-at-Arms, and we boldly picked me out a musket, shot n’ powders, a dagger, and a cutlass, fer me own!”

“I – I mean he’d - Chandler, had read recently in his study lessons about St Peter: “Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword...” he thought, but, b’gosh he needed perfection, fer even David at least had stones to go against Goliath!”

Captain studied the island, from the very top of the main mast, for hours and hours, finally in the afternoon he could see into Skilly’s Cove from the top of the highest mast and into Sprits’le Harbor. It was situated North of the main cove - and, he could barely see it. He’d given the crew extra rum and he hope that the deck crew was quite drunken beneath.

It seemed Captain’s all day absence from the deck below, allowed many rumors to fester and seeth underneath him and they all were fearful of each other. It seemed extreme to some that Captain was so worried about pursuers behind them, when, not one day, was there sight of any of the six ships after them. Was it superstition at hand here, mates? As they came closer to the treasure island so did the threat of danger and violence from the crew and from the pursuers as well increase. Or was it the evil of the jungle spooking them, or the fierce Caribe warriors within it? Or was it the curse of the gold itself?

Sprits'le Harbour

They approached the main harbor in the afternoon at a beam's reach and began to tack to get the anchor rode set despite the crew's unrest all hands came together to get the anchor rode set just right, for they musn't be blown aground in the night.

The island wasn't completely deserted, for there were a few houses, a tavern and a calm little lagoon, just big enough for a few ships to moor.

At last they pulled into harbor and dropped anchor, in the evening.

The local fishing agents rowed out to the ship in bumboats and offering provisions up to the crew:

"Peerhaps the Cab'n is a'wonting shovels, sir?" the head merchant offered, pointing to them, laying inside the boat.

"Whut-ever for!" O'Shea called back down to him, perplexed that they seemed to know their intentions already.

"Why, you're lookin fer the golde aren't ye, sir?"

"How woulde ye know what we're doing here?!"

"Any ship that sails here is only looking for *one* thing, Sir!"

"The Golde!" cried another aside him.

"How many have come here?"

"Nigh of ten ship!"

"Wow!" Cindahr exclaimed, by his side.

"They nare found anything?"

"Not that I'm awere of, sir."

"We're doing quite well helping them sir!" he cried back, gesturing to his tavern as a prosperous merchantman would. "A tavern sir, if you like, for twenty head ashore, tired of seaberths."

"Perhaps they can offer us gunpowder as well?" Murkey said before O'Shea could stop him.

"Shut up!" O'Shea hissed. "Are ye the Captain!"

"Not so much, sir." Answered the merchantman, Seth, who later went back impressed and told his wife – this crew actually might know the location of the gold, since they already want ammo!"

"Oh, and sir!" he called back to them. "Beware the Caribe!"

"Who are they? The Indians?"

"Yessir, and this island is their hunting and fishing grounds!"

"What do they hunt for?" he asked, although he already knew.

"Eel and owl and... human heads!" he storied them.

"Seems like you've kept yours!" O'Shea called back.

"Yessir, and I don't go wondering about in their hunting and fishing grounds, neither!!"

"Where do they hunt?"

"Stay far aways from the river in the far gorge, yonder." And Seth pointed to a ridgeline, where a long white of a waterfall fell. "It's where they have set their nets and traps and poisonous spikes!"

"Thanks for the warning, mate."

"Well, we're just plain, damned tired of all the dead we find - everytime a ship pulls in!"

G.

A Course Change

A great windstorm blew in that evening and Captain was forced to moor the ship for the night in the bay. No one dared leave the ship for, at sunset the angry Seas began to heave and swell underneath them, tormenting them in knowing Seafury. The Captain, fully armed, paced the pitching deck until nightfall. They'd set the anchor well and were guarded from most of the fury by a great bluff by the bay. But it did not quell the anxiety of the men for they huddled down, together, in the fo'c'sle, with chattering teeth and rumours of a great mutiny looming. The boom of the breakers could be heard thundering on the headlands of the bay, adjacent to their ship. The night winds whipped the waves and howled through their riggings, and the superstitions of the crew arose, and told mutinous whispers into these winds of doom!

The Captain stood on the rolling deck, looking ashore, for, out there in the night was his friend, Luc, anchored in Skilly's cove, North of this bay and he badly needed to ally with with Luc and to reach him, secretly. Not one soul must know!!

All that there was left to do was wait for dark and swim ashore and then walk out on the jetty rocks in the night where he could easily hail Luc with his boatswain's pipe! He looked as the sun was setting, it was a straight swim of only five hundred yards - nothing for a strong swimmer, like himself. And, he had even been studying the shore to see where the rocks lie and where currents flowed to see if there were any seaward currents to suck him back out to Sea, and he could see where they were and how to swim to outflank them. Still, he was terrified of the swim! As as spite much gold as there was beckoning him, he was terrified! He had both maps tightly wrapped in oilskin next to his heart, his boatswain pipe strapped around his belt and he held his cutlass in hand, fearing the seething mutiny all around him that would drive him to take such a desparate swim in the pitch black stormy, howling night!

When he closed his eyes these days a dreaded, fearful image of the gallows appeared before him, and there, was his mother and his tante, like Mary and Martha

in the Bible, at the foot of the gallows, crying and crying for him, begging him not to become a pirate! Too late! Too late, Ma Mere, Ma Tante, too late!

Those things that had often been before him, taunted him now, that he was an enemy to the world and - yes - to God! He would not go into the wild waters that night a man cared for by angels - nor by the whole world! He was hated and scorned. He was a murderer and doomed to hell. And - It was for real.

In agony, he went below to see Geoffrey.

He came into the cabin, the goodly captain was on his knees in prayer, with the Bible opened before him upon his rack, and Daniel uttered: "Of course!"

Geoffrey looked up as Daniel came in and nodded.

"Okay," he said, right off, pointing to the book. "I'll do it."

"Do what, Captain?"

"I'll do that thing of yours."

"That thing?"

"Y'know, that Gospel thingy. Y'know, conversion."

Geoffrey scrutinized a captain for jest but his eyes were very sober.

"Wow! Really?" Geoffrey said surprised but most eagerly. He stood up to hug him, saying "Great!"

"Yes. I'm plain tired of being so damned bad! I'm tired of being the enemy of the entire world! I'm tired of being doomed and damned! I just want to live a normal life from now on. Do you think it is too late for me?"

"Well, maybe this treasure can help you get away from this life."

"I don't deserve to have a good life, Captain McKinney."

"None of us do, Daniel. We all have fallen. We are all fallen creatures."

"But some of us are more fallen than others, you know."

"I know what you are saying, but if you just turn away, and pray, maybe God will find a way out of this madness anyways and will find a better life for you, in The New World."

"I hope so! It's what she would have wanted, bless her soul!"

"She? Your mother?"

"Yes, my Mother. She did not want this for me! Thank God she died before I first went to Sea!"

"This is wonderful news, Captain. I never expected it so soon!"

"Well - Look, the truth is - I am very greatly afraid!" He admitted, suddenly trembling before him. Geoffrey had never seen him so unnerved, even on the night of the looming mutiny had not unnerved him like this!

"Why? What's going on?"

"Because I've got to go now." He was pacing the deck now.

"Go! Go where?!!"

"Ashore."

"Why! Why now?!"

"It's the only way. I've got to swim it!" he wouldn't trust even Captain McKinney about his plans.

"Can't you wait till the morrow!!!" The winds had increased even as they spoke and they were hollowing, through the rigging, like the very moans of lost souls!!

"I've got to do a little water-walking - y'know, kinda like Peter." He said, trying to joke off his very great fear. He must go beyond now what was believeable and dive into the raging Sea!

"But surely it can wait until day time, Captain!"

"No." he said, firmly. "I just wanted you to pray for me, before I go."

"Of course, I will!" and he put his hand upon him praying, beseeching for his safety and salvation.

"You are my true friend!" Captain said, smiling. And he stood up, most boldly now, and courage newborn of a heart's true return to a kind of goodliness and - yes it was - as if suddenly he was eternally innocent of all his great crimes!!! And this very innocence had bread great courage, for, now the big Captain in the sky was on his side! And perhaps even the touches of angels, and the most powerful enabling words, from Genesis, went through his head of courage: "...*a mighty hunter before God*" and, renewed most suddenly, he smiled that most bold and great smile he was well-known for, the known world over, and he told his friend "See you on the other side!" and hugging him, he left Geoffrey there, most astonished, went topsides to the back of the stern where no one could see and tied his bootstraps, his dagger and his cutlass to his belt and then he boldly dove into the raging, black Sea!

The Hunt Begins

At the first rays of dawn, the waters were still black, and the winds were wildly hauling the waves up into huge crests and whitecaps breaking over the tops in wildly whipping cascades that she could actually see, cast in the moonlight. A light cloud far off on the horizon, belied the approach of dawn. Then a pounding on her door - it was O'Shea!

"Madame!" He came right into her compartment, shocking her thus! The lantern he held up to his sinister face, which glowed tallow orange and the deep crevasses in his face were caste in the shadows as his wild, untamed killers - his eyes - shown in the golden light.

"Madame! Where is the map?" he cried.

She shook. "Captain La Fourche has it..."

"Then you'll have to use yer memory won't you!" he cried with, murderous vexation in his throat grabbing her arm.

"My memory, sir?"

"We're going ashore now, Madame!"

"What! In that Sea!"

"Get ready, wench!" he cried.

She threw on her coat and bonnet and came out. It was still so dark. "Where's the Captain?" she cried. But O'Shea was walking away from her now, back aft towards the rowboat.

"He's gone!" he screemed over his shoulder.

"Gone!?"

Had they'd killed him!? Oh my God! "Gone where!?"

"O'Shea!"

He swatted his hands at her! Then he screamed to the men there to lower the winch.

Mortensen, Chandler, Dorry, Nico and René - the most loyal mates - strode up to the little boat in a gang and screamed to be let on the boat: "Or, we're gonna foight roight now!" cried Mortensen, with a musket in his hand. He cocked the hammer and pointed at O'Shea and he boldly got on the boat. She looked at him with frightened questions in her eyes.

"Get in, Madame!" O'Shea screamed.

She was so shocked and scared that she did as she was told. What had happened, in the night, to her love!? Everyone else got in, climbing aboard while holding pistols in their hands.

"Where's Captain?" she cried to say to René.

He put his hand down, meaning, be silent. He looked frightened and horrified.

"What's going on?"

He just shook his head and said nothing. They were so tense with each other. It seemed a mutiny was brewing aboard even the little boat.

She prayed feverishly as they rowed ashore, which seemed like a good quarter a mile away! And they were tossed highly through the dark waves, which sprayed them with Sea water and she began shaking in the cold, fear and dread! Many a time they almost capsized, but the skilled rowers righted them and they skillfully road the faces of the waves into the sheltered harbor's waters.

As the dawn lit the sky peach, she finally saw a man walking along the beach from the North and heading to meet them on the shore. She could hear O'Shea cursing when he saw him there. The man had a musket in his hand!

The man was Daniel! Ah!! What a huge relief! She thought! What a relief to see him again! She began weeping to herself in relief as they rode through the waves. How could he have got out here? She looked at him – had he swam way out here!? What was going on? Something was really wrong!

"Well, Edith, are you ready?" he called out to her as the boat made it to the sand and he strode into the brutal surging tide and picked her up, tucking her dress so that she would not get a drop wet. Someone had raised him well, she thought, as he gallantly carried her off the boat! He made her so happy that she wanted to hug him. But, of course, he was all business with her. Captain was so tense with O'Shea that neither spoke - but they looked at each other ferociously and each of their hands were on the butts of their cutlasses.

They dragged the boat onto the beach and all came out onto the island.

Ignoring O'Shea boldly, Cap'n pulled out the map out of an oilskin wallet and took over the crew. And he was there, offering an arm to steady her tread over the rocky beach. He pulled her aside.

"Don't betray us, Edith!" He whispered into her ear!

"Daniel, I am taking you to the treasure!" She said smiling up to him.

"Okay." But then he looked over her shoulder, tense.

"What's wrong, love?" she whispered.

But, he just shook his head.

And she thought:

Mutiny, mutiny, mutiny, m'love!

The sun had arisen in the sky and the fear and chill of the night had abated. The warmth of the early morning tropical sun warmed their rosey cheeks.

And he handed her the map. She unfolded it. It was quite damp!

Why?!

Treachery!

She faced the ship and did an 'about-face,' and aligned herself up to a spire of rocks, on the other side of the bay. Suddenly, she vividly recalled that she'd stood in this very place with the other captain – Captain Samuel Lawless – who had walked this with her last. Was he a dead man? She shuddered at the image of him swinging

from the gibbet, hanging from the mast in the curve of the River Thames at Lands End!

Rumors were he'd been hung from the gallows! The fact still made her swallow deep and she looked at her Daniel, by her side, for she most poignantly feared that fate for him as well! And, though he did deserve it, and yet, she hoped he would get away from it somehow, realizing then, that she really cared for him, after all. Even though he was a pirate, she sensed he was fleeing it, and, she decided, standing on that beach at twilight, that she could love a man like him!

She leaned over his arm and read her own cryptic shorthand symbols: "Thirty paces North on the beach and one comes to a chasm." And they all turned and headed North on the beach following her and the Captain.

There were fourteen of them armed with shovels and spades, swords, muskets, tackle, ropes, burlap sacks and baskets: Captain, Edith, O'Shea, Cindahr, Lateen, Sevenh, Chandler, Mortenson, René, Nico, Gallows-goat, Murkey, Bruno and of course, Dorry O'Malley. Faerburne now commanded *The Cyclone* in the harbor. They all followed Edith to the jungles edge.

At thirty paces stood the same sandstone boulder rock that she remembered from the last time. She touched it and leaned over it and peered into the jungle, where she heard the waterfall and gesturing "Come on" she stepped onto the jungle floor.

Captain stepped in after her and the immense green foliage swallowed them both up. The crew behind them gulped, looking at each other and stepped on in.

Under the jungle canopy it was dark and wet. The men, used to briny brightness of the Sea and sun, were spooked at entering such a dank, lush place like this, which had it's own fogginess, even, to confound them.

And curiously it was the white woman who led this strange pack into the jungle canopy, as the watchers in the wood saw. What kind of woman was this? A witch? A sorceress! And she even had The Devil's very own light hair!

"Twenty-nine paces..." she read in the dim light "and one can find the streamlet." And now they were clamboring over the slippery rocks besides it and onto a rocky shelf where a waterfall poured off the jungle mesa plateau high above.

They scootched their backs to the rock walls as the jungle floor fell off beneath them ten fathoms and the 'Cah-CAAW!' of strange jungle birds warned of their approach. Seething, snakes of the musky trees roots revealed slithering, side-winders and salamanders foundering all around the dank floor, far beneath.

Bruno was dizzy and hungover and belched and whined. "Oy, send me back to the ship, Mr. O'Shea!" his belly hung way over the ledge, top heavy. His face was drenched in sweat, though he shivered in fear.

"Ye can climb out on the main and ye can't cross thees ledge!" O'Shea scolded.

"At least I can hold unto the ropes, sir!"

"Go, go back ye henhearted numbskull!" the First Mate cried, shaking his fist at him. "I cuss the dey ye ware bern!"

As Bruno's back disappeared into the jungle, they all stared, wondering if they would ever see him again; such was the strength and stench of the jungles' grip. They now had thirteen unlucky men!

"How did Captain Lawless ever get a cow up here?" Captain asked with his back to the stone ledge.

"He didn't Captain. But you don't want to go the way we first went."

"Why not?"

"It's theirs."

"Who are they?"

"The jungle hunters, sir," she said, "the Indians."

"Oy feels thar's eyes upon me!" Murky cried.

Everyone was chilled with fear, especially O'Shea and Cindahr who'd actually heard the innkeeper's warning, but who had kept it to themselves. They had taken up the rear of the party. Their eyes were locked onto the Captain, but they listened intently to the jungle noises. Every snap of a twig made them jump and stick their muskets up to dark patches of jungle bushes, the watchers saw. The whitemen had their firesticks with them. Better stay back a bit.

Perplexed as they were, they all continued to be amazed by the utter lack of fear from Edith who boldly led this pack through the jungle. They'd forgotten just how bold she could be, especially as she was completely distracted by her most charming consort into the jungle, her Captain!

"Look for the hangman's tree, now." She said, looking up. An ancient, dead white skeleton of a tree, stood there, bone white, bleached in the sun, amidst the dank green background. "Ah, there it is! Now take thirty paces aft, you will find a little ledge in the rocks." And she led them, on 'tipy-toes,' to an opening between the high wall of rocks that jutted way up into the mist. She walked down the opposite side and into a jungle gorge. They struggled to keep up with her.

Then they suddenly stumbled upon the 'trespassing signs' posted by a most primitive peoples: Skulls, spikes and arrowhead points and boulders precariously perched to fall down upon them!

"Oh, this is the wrong way! Captain, let's go back a hundred paces! We need to take the upper ledge out of the ravine - the steep one!"

The turned around and ran smack into Bruno – dead and pinned, still standing, as if just drunken and leaning against a tree.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAaaay!" Murkey cried.

"Calmé, calmé." He soothed her, rubbing her hair.

Suddenly she felt him tense up:

"Okay, gather around in a circle!" Cap'n told them and they faced outwards with their longshooters and cutlasses and they began to see their foes' fearsome painted faces in the dim light.

"It's the Indians, Daniel!" She whispered to him.

"Shhhhhh!" someone hissed.

"What do they want?"

"Our heads!!" whispered Cindahr.

"Captain, they want..." she started to say but O'Shea hissed viciously:

"Shut her up, Daniel!"

Eleven of the Indians gathered around them, now. Their dark painted faces with all kinds of outlandish and wild paints and their feverish, red-tinged, voodoo eyes looked upon them as if with creatures of the wild forests; who'd never looked upon no other man that they hadn't eaten! They were their prey!!

"Ooohng a bun goalah!" one uttered now. The white men didn't know the creatures could speak languages, for they seemed so primitive and wild, indeed!"

Now, they chanted wild gibberish of spells cast over them, and stalking and then dancing around them while jabbing at them with their sharp points and then finally they stopped at the Captain.

"Ooohng a bun goalah!" one uttered again. He seemed like their leader.

"They want to rape her, Captain!!" Nico said.

And she said "Daniel..."

"Shhh, Edith." He whispered back.

"Wait, Daniel, I..."

He held her back. And the man cried again. "Ooohng a bun goalah!"

"Daniel! They want a lock of my hair!"

"What!" he cried. And she was pushing him aside and boldly going right around him!

"They'll scalp you!" he cried out.

"No Daniel!" she spun around jesting to him, hands on hips: "You've been reading too many romance novels!" And she laughed heartily at him! And all the pirates gasped!

And then she turned around before the Indians, curtsying politely.

Both parties weree stunned by this! And even the Indians laughed heartily at her sudden boldness! The leader bowed back.

Nodding to them, she pulled down her long hair, which fell in long plaits of gold.

"Awwwh!" they cried in wonder.

Sensing that the Indians had relaxed, she boldly grabbed a knife right from one of their very own hands! He laughed heartily out of shock of her very boldness!

"Owuh!" the chief cried. He glanced to his leader astonished at her act and then she remembered him. "Oh-Pa." she nodded.

And he smiled back in surprise at her!! The white woman, returned, bodes many charms!

"Chief Una-rang-tu." She bowed.

He uttered something back.

And then she reached in the back of her head, grabbing a lock and chopped a lopped it right off.

"Bunh Goalah!" she cried, lifting it high, for all to see, and she gently offered it to him, with both hands.

"Awh!" the wild chief cried, taking his gift and played with her long lock, like one does a fine, golden necklace chain. Then he wrapped the ends of it with something that stuck like catgut.

"We each have our own kind of gold, Captain!" She quipped, over her shoulder, back to her him.

"HA!" Cap'n just laughed in amazement at her! "Indeed! We do!"

"You forget, Daniel, that I have been here before!" she put her hands on her hips and the Indians suddenly laughed at this turnabout. And the Captain laughed heartily at himself!

"I'll cut them some more." She said smiling, and pulled out more locks. "This is like gold to them, Daniel, they'll make all kinds of things out of it: blond hair makes good fishing ties and lures and golden bracelets for their women! Oh - and bragging trophies to show to the other tribes on the islands of their alliance with 'The Whites!'"

"Mother of God!" He whispered, shaking his head at her.

"Gallows, cut some of your hair too as a good-will gesture." She said handing the blond seaman the knife and his eyes got big, but he chopped off some locks as well and handed carefully to another Carib.

"You too, Mortenson." She said. And he cut a blond lock off as well.

"OOohng bung goalah!" the main man said, pointing to the Captain.

"Oh, they want a lock of your hair, too, Captain."

"D'accord." He uttered and undid his long hair, lopping off a long, wiry black lock with his dagger and handed it to the head Carib, who spun it with her lock, in his palms.

Then the chief said some magical words as the blond and the black strands became interwoven together into a two foot long magical twine, black but interlaced with the golden sparkles of her hair. His eye's gleamed with pleasure and satisfaction he held it up before them. "Mona-dah!" and then he was twirling it over their heads.

"I think it's some kind of spell," She said. "Perhaps it's for hunting luck."

"Or head hunting." O'Shea said.

"Or fertility rites!" said Dorry O'Mally and they all just laughed; although Edith blushed deep red.

And as soon as they all were laughing, the Indians backed off, nodding politely and disappeared back into their dark jungle world.

"Okay." She said.

"I'm glad that's over with!" he laughed at her! His eyes were wide with surprise.

"You don't have to be a man to be really brave!" She quiped right back, her nose uppity again!

"Indeed, not!" Captain said, smiling widely at her while everyone else was laughing in huge relief.

'The Laughing White Tribe,' the chief thought in his own tongue as he left: 'They were a fierce tribe, for even their women laughed at Fear!'

She looked back down at her map and methodically followed it until she lead them into a nice broad meadow, away from the treacherous ravine, and had them all sit down, in the sun, and each took a few swigs from the rum and wine bottles, and munched on thehardtack they'd stashed in their pockets, while some picked wild plaintain bananas that grew all around the edge of the meadow. Then the crew devoured the thick fruit and drank water from the ponds, full of tadpoles.

"Okay," Captain said after a while. "Back to our little hunt." and they followed her eagerly across to the far side of the meadow and then up a high bluff that twisted and climbed onto a high plateau that overlooked it all.

After a half hour climb, they finally arrived at the top, breathless and heaving. They could overlook everything from up here. Captain went over to the edge and peered over the horizon intently. "So no wonder no one has ever found it! Who would have ever thought that they could have got the massive treasure chest all the way up here!"

She went over to the far side of the Mesa - that overlooked the Sea, and touched another sandstone rock, they all followed her intently. Consulting her map, she put heal to toe for ten paces, she carefully tread out to the middle of the sandy surface, at an angle. Everyone was watching her intently as they all saw that the trail had grown really hot. She suddenly stopped, and, with her heal, she dug in an 'X' saying:

"Captain! 'X' marks the spot!"

And they all cried out "AAAAArrrrrrrrrrggggggggghhhh!" and rushed over to her 'X' with shovels and began heaving up great clods of dirt and sandy loam!

They dug and dug and dug. For an hour the crazy White men dug. The sun pounded the golden backs of the men, the sand stuck to their sweat, and no one had brought fresh water with them, which made them so irritable, despite the frenzy of the search for gold!

"There's water down in the meadow!" Murkey cried.

"No time for it! No time!" Captain cried.

O'Shea had joined in, and cried "How deep Edith?"

"Soon. Soon." She soothed.

"How deep did ye bury the thing!" another called to her.

"Deep enough!" she shouted back.

The hole was getting deep and the men were disappearing down into it.

And then Nico hit the chest with his shovel.

"I hit eeet!" he cried. "I hit eeet!"

O'Shea jumped right down into it, landing on it with a thump, and leaned over brushing the sand aside. Suddenly there appeared before them the top of the treasure chest! They dug all around it. Someone through down a rope and O'Shea climbed out of the hole.

"There's handles on its side, for tackle!" she told them and they dug until they found them. They threw Nico heaving lines and he tied them to the handles.

"Hurray!" they screamed, Nico was pulled out, and then they began to heave up the giant treasure chest!"

But, oh, what a big task! They heaved and heaved and heaved it with heavy ropes and tackle tied to nearby trees, and though all twelve men heaved, it was tremendously heavy! Finally, they got it hauled onto the sands after catching their breath for many minutes, dreadfully thirsty.

O'Shea busted the lock open, with a shovel, and before their eyes, lay, gleaming in the hot sun, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of Pieces of Eight!!

"HURRAY!" all cried.

They stared into the chest, transfixed by the immense fortune: There were Spanish Dubloons, Pieces of Eight, intermixed and tangled golden necklaces, belts, hair pins, coronets, bracelets, rings and tiaras, and daggers, little mirrors... all studded with rubies, emeralds and pearls; all encrusted in silver and gold! Then lay a most beautiful sword or dagger, perhaps a Persian or Arabian Scimitar. Its case was encrusted in jewels and gold and its handle of carnelian, rubies, emeralds and diamonds! Underneath the scimitar lay many bricks of silver and gold! It was an immense, immense fortune!

The White men began to dance around it like wild little children and sang songs of jubilation and glee:

"A thousand -- a thousand-thousand Pieces of Eight!"

"A fortune, a fortune, a fortune, my friend!"

"I'm gonna see my gurl, again, and deck her fair hair with long garlands of gold!"

She smiled up to the Captain and declared "Now I want *my* treasure!" and he laughed and grabbed her, spun her around and kissed her right there in front of all! And they all screamed!

"A feast, a feast to the great Golden Islamorada!"

They were tossing the coins up in the air. "Alroight! No pocketing them!" cried the First Mate, "We'll get our tally on the ship, foirst and then divvy up all the gold across all hands!" he cried. "Pit that necklace down, Nico, ye ain't no Lady-in-waiting!"

Nico layed it back into the chest reverently.

"There must be two hundred coins in there, Captain!" Mortenson cried.

"And about twenty bejeweled necklaces!"

"Where did Captain Lawless get all this treasure, Edith!?" Captain asked her breathlessly.

"I'm not sure, I think he captured it in a Spanish ship off Cartagena, or was it off Maracaibo? I don't know but he was taking it back to his home in Elizabeth City, when, the Spaniards chased him across The Caribbean and he veered over here to careen the ship in secrecy."

"Why was it that you went with him?"

"He wanted a trustworthy witness to transcribe the treasure map. He trusted me."

Captain nodded. "I trust you too."

"Thank you, Captain." She said, smiling and as radiant as an East Indian safire.

The Return of *The Vantage*

"Ship Ahoy, Cap'n! *The Vantage* sails off yon cape!" Cried René, pointing vigourously to the horizon. Again, while they celebrated their treasure he had kept watch.

And they all rushed away from the chest to see it there, perhaps twenty miles away.

"OH NO!" They all cried. "HOW can this be!!!"

"Ye were right, Cap'n! Ye were right about her! She waere hard behoind us all the time!" cried O'Shea.

"I once served under her Captain!" he replied. "I knew what he would do!"

"He's the very devil!" Cried Cindahr.

"How could he have done this?" Cried Mortenson.

"Chandler." Cap'n called the boy, who had hauled his scope up the hill for him. The boy gave it to him.

"She has a very determined captain behind her!" said Captain La Fourche who was looking through the scope at her "Look, crew, this is what we're going to have to do. We're going to rebury this treasure right now!" he shut the scope decisively.

Everyone looked aghast at this idea!

"Why should we haul it all down for them to take away or just so it will weight us down in battle? Look, it's been safe here for years, so well leave it here go back after them and once we sink *The Vantage*, then we'll come back for it – we know where it is, after all - and they do not!"

They were knodding heads, for his words made sense, but they were sad!

"Nico, you and René and Mortenson. You will remain guard over this sight!"

"Aye, Captain!" they all cried.

"Thar's on one condition, Captain La Fourche." said O'Shea.

"Who are ye to tell me conditions!" Cap'n said.

"I am he who takes three-fourths the crew with me if it don't loike what ye says."

"Oh, really!" he said, his eyes were large and wild and he was about to draw his sword.

"Now let's talk sense here, Cap'n." he said, gesturing with his hands to calm down. "We all signed that we must agree to all orders Captain!"

"..."

"Cap'n, if we goes back towards Port Royal, all sits roight with the crew and ye cun keep on playing Cap'n, if ye like. If ye order us to New Orleans as ye have said it previously, I will become the captain!"

"And what is so wrong with a simple stop at New Orleans?"

"Swamps and bayous and utter misfortune. We wants right back onto the golden trail."

"Without ammo??"

"We'll heist some."

"And how are you going to heist ammo -- without ammo!?"

"We'll figger it out!"

"Your words don't make sense!"

O'Shea shrugged. He had the crew.

"So you will have us back out thar endlessly hunting when we now can make our way well on land in The New World with this fortune!" he said pointing to the chest. "We can all now become rich men! We can create our own kingdom in Louisianna. Our own Port Royal!"

"The crew wants back to Jamaica." He restated.

"We will have six ships of the Royale Navy after us, if we go back that way! Have you not been listening to Corporal Dennison?"

"It's a chance we'll have to take." For the lure of Pirate Haven was so strong, now that the gold was here, it was all they could think of! It was the only thing they could think of. And it was pure folly!

"Ye have no choice, Captain, the crew has voted."

"You voted without me!"

"We all did, Daniel."

"Look I am not your prisoner!" And, he was pulling out his sword on the First Mate!

"No sire, but, we are one crew and that is what we all wants." He said, backing up with his hands high above his head.

Captain la Fourche lowered his sword and regained his senses, for *The Vantage* Had just come across his eyesight once again, and he was regaining his Sealegs in this struggle. It was wise to fight the English Navy, first, then get this 'business' settled with Marcus, later!

"I am sorry, Marcus, I'm just plain tired of the Sea, tired!" He tried to explain, to sooth and he put away his sword.

But he sensed it was already way too late.

"Thar is no leaving it now, Captain, we have always been tied together - until The very end!" He smiled malevolently, crossing his arms most boldly. "You now belong to me!"

"I DO NOT!!"

"It's to the end, Daniel!"

"To The End, Marcus!? It may come sooner than you think!!"

"To the end, then, Daniel La Fourche! To the death! A Le Morte!!" He cried.

And thus this curse they had self-pronounced upon themselves had not come back unto them, void.

So they sadly reburied the golden chest, wondering if they would ever see it again and then they headed swiftly back down to the beach, running for their lives, not even thinking of the murderous Carib, who watched the crazy white men scramble back down the bluff. But then the Indians saw another big ship on the horizon!

As he ran back down to the beach the First Mate sang a wild Seasong of his own invention, inside his own head, against a Captain who'd outwitted him so good so many a'time:

Murderous and mutinous - murderous and mutinous were the crew o' The Cyclone's league, following, following the cursed gold, into and into yon wilden Seas!

At the jungles opening to the beach, Cap'n let them all go ahead and he stopped with her there.

"Well, Edith, this is it!"

"What!!

"I'm leaving you here."

"Why?"

"Edith, go stay at the Inn down the beach." He dug in his pocket and handed her some dubloons.

"Why?!"

"Look, we are very outgunned by *The Vantage!* I fear for all of our lives! It's safer for you and Captain McKinney to stay here! I'll be having him rowed ashore, immediatley."

"Will I ever see you again, Daniel!" she cried to him, grabbing his sleave, as he turned to go.

"I..."

"I will go where you go!"

"You will be hunted!"

"I've been two years to Sea now; I've learned that I can take it."

"It's not a life for a lady."

"I am not a lady without a man!"

"You hate pirates!"

"I've been two years to Sea with pirates!"

He shakes his head and turns away. She grabs his hand "At least, Daniel, tell me where you will go, so that if you have to fly away from here, I'll know where."

"I can't - you hate pirates."

"You must!" and she began to weep "You must! You promised me! You did! You did!"

"..."

"Are you going to New Orleans, Daniel!???" she wept, most pitifully there.

And, sighing at the overwhelming power of women's tears, he leaned over to her ear and whispered the spot that they had already spoken of many times.

"I thought so!" she whispered back. "That will be an excellent place for you! You will blend in there!!" She was excited for him now, for he really had made actual plans to get away! She looked at his face in wonder, for he was no longer a pirate in her mind, for he had, indeed, turned away for real. And before her was no longer a pirate, but a prince!

But he stood back and was wildly frustrated with himself for telling her the truth, and the pressure redoubled upon his shoulders because of O'Shea and he spat: "And now, Edith, you have the power to finish me off for good!"

She shook her head 'No', while her face betrayed a head full of wonder: "No, Daniel, these jewels around my neck mean nothing to me" Flippantly, she tossed the chain back upon her chest. "Can't you *possibly understand*, Daniel! *YOU* are my treasure."

He got it - and, too, her loyalty was of a high value to him, so he sighed and then he kissed her there solemnly, and then left her there, standing on the beach, and watching him as he boldly strode back to his big ship - and to his lot in life.

She only had prayers for him now.

Prep for Battle

"Hey Murko, row us all out to *The Cyclone!*" Cap'n cried, striding down the beach to where all the crew was boarding the whale boat.

"Yessir!"

The minutes were tense ones as they were rowed to the ship, crashing through the pounding white surf.

As the whale boat approached the ship Cap'n began shouting orders, left and right:

"All Hands!! Prepare for an attack! Dubloon and the whole starboard section – dump all the flour barrels and fill them with water! Open the seacock and fill the second hold with seawater!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

As soon as the boat barely touched the ship's hull, Cap'n suddenly sprang in a great leap aboard the ship most agily, like a panther. O'Shea clambored up at his heals, but he was much slower.

Once onboard Captain sprang around, like a whip, and stuck his dagger right between the eyes of the First Mate and stopped him midway before he could climb up to the gunwhale. "I ought to kill ye right now!"

"Sir!" O'Shea cried and Captain pushed the knife into his face, forcing him to lean backwards, over the ocean. Blood dripped down his nose like tears.

"Sir, *The Vantage* comes!" Cindahr cried.

"Mutiny!" he cried. "Ericson, Jowls and Machen, tie O'Shea up in the galley!" and the big, loyal mates yanked O'Shea right off the gunwhale, pulling him backwards.

"I'll get you, Daniell! I'll get you for this!" O'Shea screamed and twisted as they hauled him aboard and away. "Mac Lean, Burbage! Help me! Help me!"

But Captain held a loaded pistol to them. "I'll shoot anyone who sides with O'Shea! I'll shoot straight away anyone who releases him!" he screamed at the crew. "GOT IT!? Now, tie those two up, too, Machen and Lyncher!"

Everyone stood aghast! And the two loyal mates wrestled them to the deck, as they screemed bloody hell!

"Look, we don't have time to try him for mutiny!!!" Cap'n cried over their screams. "From the bluff, we caught a sighting of *The Vantage!* She comes right now! All hands, gather round!"

He screamed to the Boatswain: "Izzy, Pipe General Quarters!"

And the ladders and decks thundering as all the rest of the crew all came running up and onto the quarter deck.

The Vantage is almost here! Look, we are going to fill all the barrels and secondary holds with seawater and so they'll think we are heavy with gold and so hopefully they'll try to not to sink us with their frickin' sixty six inch guns! Meanwhile we'll be swinging around the cape, and we'll pump the holds out the backsides and

pour out the barrels and we'll get real light and we can fly around them to broadsides! Look, Sir Francis Drake did something like this! Got it?!

"We don't have the gold yet?!!" Powers cried.

"Nay, we found it though, and then we saw *The Vantage* coming. We'll get it right after we sink her!"

"..."

"No sense in digging it up for them! So, look, it's still safe!" Captain exclaimed. "Okay, dump the barrels! Everyone arm up! Load yer guns!"

And they hustled around filling the barrels and holds with water while arming up and untying the gaskets and readying the sail lying in the lazy jacks to be swiftly hauled up the mast by its throat. Huge gangs formed immediatley on every line to haul away as fast as they could.

"Where's Captain McKinney?" he cried to Scallows.

"Below decks, sir!"

He rushed down underdecks to the companionway down to his cabin and flung open the hatch. They had locked Captain McKinney in and had put heavy chains on him!

"Oh!" Captain McKinney cried in great shock.

Cap'n ransacked his desk for the key he had hidden in the dry ink well.

"Captain!" he was most marveled to see him return from his ordeal in the Sea at night. "You made it back!"

"Yes I did!! Thank you much!"

"I am so glad to see you made it!" he had withstood enormous surf and a long swim to shore!

"Of course I did - I had yer prayers, Captain!"

Captain McKinney stood there, mouth gaping, in wonder.

"Forgive me for being a mere mortal!" Captain McKinney declared, his mouth still wide open in surprise. "I just got a lesson from you - about Faith!"

"Okay, okay, but, look, I could use a few more words upstairs, right now - We're about to be attacked again!"

"Okay!"

"Look, Geoffrey, this is it!" he hunched down and unlocked his strongbox under his rack. "You're leaving this ship!!"

"What!?"

"Gather your stuff! I'm having you rowed ashore RIGHT NOW!"

"Oh!"

"It's *The Vantage* again!" he cried, unlocking Captain McKinney's chains.

"Okay, Captain, you're free to go now! Look, I'm terribly sorry what I've done to you!" He leaned over and grabbed the heavy golden chain within the strongbox. "Take this as passage back to Bristol, will you? I can't pay you any other way right now!"

He draped it right over his friend's head. "Don't object Geoffrey - I don't have time for it! Look, this should help right all the wrongs I have done ye!"

Captain McKinney stuffed the golden chain under his shirt and grabbed Edith's bible and stuffed it in his seabag with his clothes.

"Here - takes these back to her, too." Captain said, and as Captain McKinney held the canvas bag open he stuffed down her stack of books. "It's *her* treasure - Madre de Dios!"

And they faced each other. "I will pray for you Daniel."

"Good! I'm going to need it!"

"Farewell, then, Daniel!" he said.

"You are my friend, Geoffrey" he said. "I wish it had been under better circumstances!"

"Ah... it'll all make a good seastory when I get back home!" Captain McKinney said, rubbing the 'X' still carved upon his face.

"I'm sure it will!" he said, looking at the scar, swallowing: "I am truly sorry I did that to you!"

"Well, no one would have believed my story, if you hadn't!"

"Ha!"

And they embraced each other like brothers. "I will not forget you, Daniel!"

"Nor I - you."

"Remember your promise to me Daniel."

"Yes."

"Fair winds and following Seas to you, Captain La Fourche!"

"Thank you, sir."

And they walked up to the main deck and they shook hands and Captain McKinney threw his seabag into the row boat.

"Lawrence." Captain pointed, "Go with him."

"Yessir!" he went swiftly below and got his seabag and then tossed it in the boat.

"The boy went over to shake his former Captain's hands, farewell, when Cap'n La Fourche cried out:

"Captain! Take the kid with you!"

"What!" the boy turned to him.

"Take him with you, Geoffrey!"

"I want to stay with YOU, Captain La Fourche!" Chandler screamed.

"It's too rough, Chandler! I don't want you to get hurt!"

"But, I want to stay with YOU, Captain La Fourche!"

"But, you can't swim, boy!"

"I won't leave you, sir!!!"

"We'll be back, kid, I promise, now go take care of Edith!" he cried.

And Captain McKinney then yanked the boy's arm, who fought him hard, but Captain McKinney was a powerful, big man and he drug Chandler across the deck. It was a sad scene but a small touch comical for the boy was flapping like a fish on a line, all the way to the rowboat. Lawrence grabbed his ankles and they both heaved

the boy up, who whirled wildly about like a wiggling log, and they threw him into the boat!

"Cap'n stood there by the gunwhale soberly staring down at the boy with all the crew, who laughed most warmly at the kid, who sat there, bawling like a baby!"

Cabbage cried "Ahoy, Meestair Chandler! Yer seabag!" and threw it into the boat. Lawrence caught it. "Awwww, kid! We'll be back fer ye!" Cabbage told him.

He sobbed while the crew lowered them into the water with winches.

"Cheer up kiddo!"

"God speed to ye, Chandler!" Cap'n took off his hat, a warm gesture of respect. "Ye were most loyal to me!"

"But I only blubbered back a reply to him, for I had lost my father, my family - and my whole world once again!!" Shaw said, swallowing hard and taking another drink to wash this memory down with.

She watched, from the beach, as they rowed out onto the harbor and landed with the surf. The kid sat hunched over and forelorn in the boat, while Captain McKinney and Lawrence rowed.

"Alas, Madame, you are all right?" he says wading up to her, in the white churning water, and pulled the boat by the line, to beach it, on the sand.

"Yes, Captain McKinney."

She saw the boy blubbering, still in the boat. "What's wrong Chandler?"

"He wouldn't let me stay!" he got out of the boat and his feet hit the churning sand.

"He wouldn't let me stay either."

"Well, there's going to be a big fight!"

"But, I've already been in many battles with him!!" The boy cried, tripping through the frothy surf that made a hissing rush for the beach.

"I know." Captain McKinney patted his back. The three men hauled the heavy boat until it mired into the sand. And then they tied the boat's prow to a tall coconut tree. Then they began the long walk along the broad beach, towards the pub a mile away.

"I guess it's going to be a bad one, Lawrence!" Captain said, as they walked, looking seawards and prolly a'prayin.

"Aye, Captain. I think so too."

"It's nice to be called Captain again." Captain McKinney admitted.

"It's great to have you back, sir." His loyal First Mate replied.

"It was great of him to let us all go."

"It was most chivalrous of him." She said, swallowing.

"Well no sense of risking our lives out there as well."

But, the boy just sobbed, and boo-hooed, his lower lip sticking out; he was still such a kid!

"Chandler got kind of attached to him." Captain McKinney explained to her, putting his arm around the boy's shoulders fondly as they walked.

"We all did, kiddo." She said, and she, too, slid an arm around his waist as they walked on together down the beach, together. "We all did."

And they walked silently along the long strand to the little inn, by the bay.

The Sea Battle

The four people from *The Cyclone* sat in the pub, dejected. After many a month to Sea, they were served fresh fruit and steaks; and they ate upon dry, steady ground that didn't heave at every mood change of the wind. The Innkeeper, Seth Mouldour, could find no reason to see the four so glum. They only mumbled answers to his questions. He finally served them some ale.

The others in the pub laughed and drank up, for they'd made a very pleasant trade of rum and food with *The Cyclone* for all their spare gunpowder.

But the four sat there for a long time, expectant of something and other's scoffed at them, but most slowly started to realize that they knew something big was about to happen.

The boy, who appeared to them as the captain's cabin boy, sat jittery and alert and occasionally got out and looked at the bay, ignoring all the pub's questioning and then their incessant teasing for hours.

At twilight a clangin bell went off in the distance and the boy suddenly ran out of the pub, followed by everyone in it.

Out on the bay were two ships now silhoetted in the deep red of the sunset - two big ships turning-to out there!

"What's going on boy!" they caught up to him, breathing hard and gathered behind him and Captain and Edith who stood anxiously on the quay wall.

"What ship is that, boy!?"

"..."

"Oh, it looks like a Royal Naval Ship has arrived!"

"Yeah, that's rumored to be the *HMS Vantage*." One of them insisted.

"Are they about to attack your ship, kid?"

"..."

"Was that Captain La Fourche I saw today, kid?"

He said nothing.

"Yep, Peter, that was the Great Pirate Captain Daniel La Fourche!"

"Oh, wow, I thought that was him! My! What a feller! He was everything I thought he would be."

"Aye."

"Oh, are they going to fight out there?"

"Shoot, it sure looks like it!"

The lady in front of the crowd turned to the man besides her and suddenly she swooned and fainted and he caught her and lay her down on his coat in the lemon grass, behind the crowd, fanning her face.

The ships came about each other and...

"B-BBBBBBOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMM!!!" Roared the twenty canons of *The Vantage*!

And the return fire of *The Cyclone*, starboardside:

“BBBBBBBOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMMMMMM!!”

And then, relentlessly, *The Vantage* shot salvo after salvo into her hull!! Explosions of balls of fire and booms of thunders, over and over!

Many muskets rained down fire and – they watched terribly straining to see Captain La Fourche – out there, in the smokey lit night, in a most dreadful fight! *The Vantage* was fully upon *The Cyclone* now and halted her shots and the crew was throwing lines with harpooning hooks to her gunwhales! Then forty Royal Marines prepared to board *The Cyclone*. They scrambled aboard in droves; looking as bloodthirsty and greedy as the pirates, themselves.

And the sails of both ships caught a’blaze suddenly as they watched the dreadful fight! Soon the night had fallen but, both ships blazed, infernos upon the waters, illuminating both decks and the dreadful fight!

And now the Captain himself on the quarterdeck shot at the invaders.

Suddenly O’Shea flew out from the ladder well and charged at him, wildly, from behind his back! His hand arched high over his head - with the same storied Scimitar sung of in the pubs, gleaming in the fires of the sails! They could see it gleam from the shore! Captain turned around in the last second and saw it!

“It’s Captain and O’Shea, sir!” screamed the boy. “They’re fighting EACH OTHER!!”

“Oh, no! Why!! Why fight each other now!!” Cried Captain McKinney. “Why NOW! O Lord, Help him! Help them!”

Clang! Clang! And more and more sails caught on fire and illuminated it all! The boarding Marines fought the entire crew on deck, hand to hand!! Sharpshooters from the high spars rained down fire upon them! Clear as day, they saw The Captain embraced his own First Mate in a feat of arms! Clang! Clang! They could hear their swords clash from the shore! More Marines swarmed aboard, near the bow, shooting.

All that envy and hate roiled up in the First Mate and he charged Cap’n woildly --he must have been completely drunk! Now the Marines faught on the Main Deck, en masse and *The Cyclone* began to list t’ bow!

The Marines charged back aft, uphill, shooting.

“Á Le Morte! Daniel! To the Death!” he cried.

Then they shot straight at O’Shea: “BOOOOM!” he flew suddenly backwards, disappearing back into the fogbank of smoke on main deck.

And Captain fell down on the slanting deck and then he rolled into the dark waters beneath and had vanished into the black waters!

The Cyclone’s sails blazed on in the height of full battle aboard, while her bow slid suddenly *Downwards*,

Downwards,

Downwards sank She,

*And she sailed under the Sea!” **

from: ‘The Seaman’s Hall

Book of Chantees:

‘A Singing History of Piracy’

Picture: Sea Night Fight!



The Captain

Suddenly, Shaw or Chandler, or whoever he was, smugly folded his hands across his chest, his tale seemingly finished; but everyone sat there still dazed, at the sudden stop to the story.

"Is that it?" Elizabeth asked her pen still poised above the paper.

He smiled his answer.

"Is there any more to the story?"

"Well..."

"What ever happened to the Captain?" She urged once more. "Did he drown like they all said?

He held his tankard backwards, but for one more time:

*If ye be wantin' more story,
Pay the man up - for this glory!
One more, Peter:
For the grand ending of me tale!"*

Peter filled the tankard up.

"Now that I's an older man, I have nigh the treasure of this great story to reap:"

"At the first bit of twilight, I grabbed me musket and dared to go, all alone, back up the scary, long path to the treasure trove! I ware sooooo afraid of the Injuns! The jungle twitched, and eyes were all upon me from the very second I opened the curtains of the jungle's gate!

But I wares a man now, and I says to meself all along the way - what woulda Cap'n La Fourche do? I was a man, now, and for the first toime in me loife I was dead alone and dead afraid! But I ware a man lookin' fer a grand treasure, and a certain and real, and deadly treasure and I forced meself, on the beach to go into the jungle's door, into the dark night of the jungle to go in, retrace our long path to the summit. As I opened the vines that ware the door of the jungle, I felt their eyes snap upon me from the very beginning! I felt the hunter's eyes upon me neck! But, I just had to go!"

"I wares wont to slip off the mossy cliffs by the waterfall, to pass the deadman, Bruno, somehow still standing there in the glimmer of the moonlight - I swear he ware still a'smoiling at me! Standing thar a'smoiling!"

"Ye got a lot of nerve coming back up hey-re!" he was a'saying t'me in me poor noggin: "I'm gonna set the Injuns upon ye! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! HA!" his wicked laugh echoed in the dark jungles all along the way! "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! HA!""

"I tormented meself to see the sculls and sharp points guarding the no-man's land of their treasured fishing spots and thus I took the high path and went past them it into the big meadow as the sky became lavender and not so much night."

"It ware a long walk across the great meadow, I keep fallin into ponds of water, where Oy threw me head in an drank like a bloody cow!"

"At the base of the mountain, I began to call out to René, Nico and Mortenson many a time along the way! I could feel the Indians breath roight behind me! Surely they would come to me rescue soon! Soon! I called out many a toime! I turned around meny a toime and pointed me musket into nothing, but I could feel 'em roight behoinds me. I was a big man by now, perhaps they feared me? I didn't chance it! I foired a round into the night! "Geet back ye head-scalpers!"

"I reached the hill and ascended, but when I reached the summit the sliver of the sun had broked the horizon and I saw that Mortenson, René and Nico were all gone! During the fight and probably all night they must have spirited away the chest, with all its gold!! There was nothing there but a big gaping hole and a mound of dirt to the side of it. But where had they taken the treasure? Had they reburied it?

I then looked around a discovered that there was another faint trail that lead off the mountain top and toward a cove on the far side North of the island."

"And then, astonished as the light of the morning came I climbed upon the top of the high mound, was this sodden, crumpled hat, I picked up it and straightened it up. It was our Captain's hat!! It was still soaked from the briny Sea!

"Right then, as I beheld it in wonder."

"Being on the highest point in the island, from that mound of dirt, I then searched the Seas North of the trail, for answers - and then, far, far off in the distance I finally did see the white, sails of *The Duck*!"

The crowd gasped.

I was the only white man ever to see it and in triumph I watched her sail away and away and over the rim of the red horizon, and be seen no more!"

"And Captain La Fourche had actually saved me poor little life! I realized then that I wouldn't have survived that seafight! I could never have swam away in those black seawaters, and Captain obviously had! Cap'n had swum away in the night!"

He had known he ware doomed on board *The Cyclone*! And he'd made plans to get away with his true friend, Captain Janvier and all the gold that they could possibly haul!"

"And then, I felt something against me foot, it was now a bit more loight to the sky. I looked down at me feet, and where the hat had been was a small ditty bag, filled with Pieces of Eight and a bag of jewels, for me!!"

"Ah!" I cried as I gazed at it, for I had won in that night fight, as well, for here was my bright future in front of my very feet!"

"The sun came out and shined upon me jewels and pieces of eight and how they glittered the glare and magical glow as only gold and diamonds can! I suddenly lost all me fear of the Carib in that glimmer! I had the mad spell of the gold come upon me now!"

"I'm the only one who knows!" I exclaimed to meself.

Then I swung up the shovel and put all that dirt back into the hole, thus cementing the great mystery of the treasure once again! It took me many hours but, no one must ever know! I cleaned up all the dirt and left the mesa as if no one had

ever been thar! And, no one would ever know whut happened to the great Captain La Fourche...

And the gooooooooolllllllllllldddddd!"

"And then I grabbed me cutlass boldly in one hand and the bag of gold in the other! God help any man - white or red - to stand in front of me path that day - or, ever again!! And in that instance I knew that I had become a man!"

And a pirate...

"And I hauled it slowly down, to the rocky bluff overlooking the bay, cutlass in me hand. If there were any Caribe watching me that day, they gave me the woidest berth, for I walked down that trail without a speck of fear!

I reached the bluffs above the township, reburying the gold and pocketing the jewels and makin' a map of eet fer meself on a hanky. All the whoile promising meself, that I'd come back back for it one day - aye, mates, one day, when I would command a ship for meself and sail her back over to this place to reclaim all me treasure! And that's how I went on eventually to get me own ship and become the Captain that *I* became!! And that folks is another story, for yer pleasure and another toime!"

The crowd gasped at his final, out-right admission! The School Teacher, Walt shook in his shoes! His life was in jeopardy since those first foolish words at the beginning of the tale!! He wisely caught Elsa, by the elbow, and said "Send *Captain Chandler, yonder*, over a full bottle of the pub's best Scotch!"

"Aye, sir." She said and got on tip-toes to reach the best bottle from the high oak shelves and she wrapped it in muslim and presented it to Shaw with a curtsy, "Eet's from 'im."

He smiled decadently at her, and he opened it and poured himself and the teacher tumblers. He lifted his shot glass in the air, and then Cap'n continued onwards with his tale toasting:

"I had stood over the treasure and laughed and laughed and laughed!! Captain La Fourche had won everything that night! Everything! I knew then he'd gotten safely away!!"

The citizens of the town of Charleston had never heard *this* turn of story, nor had anyone before! And they sat there spell-bound before Captain Chandler, the grand teller of seatales!

"So you're Captain Chandler, Shaw!" cried Mary Elizabeth. This was one for the books!

"At your service, Madame." He tipped his brow to her and they all gasped!

Not only had Shaw really been out there on *The Cyclone* - he had known the Great Pirate Captain Daniel La Fourche! And! And, he had followed in his footsteps! For, Captain Chandler had been the last major pirate ever to have sailed the Seas and here he had been, all this time, evading the law, boldly living the life of a rotten, drunken gentleman in their midst. And now they knew who he really was! Tales of

Captain Chandler could fill a book, too: 'For, if they'd dare pay for such another grand tale, I'd tell ye!'

Le Morte du Cyclone

Drinking his excellent, aged Scotch, with a rush of its glory returned to his head, Shaw continued:

"And then Chandler went back to the tavern to tell Captain McKinney, but first he decided to go to Edith's little cottage and he knocked upon her door."

She peeped out the crack in the door; she was pale and hunched over, her hair amiss. Her room was cold, dark and gloomy.

"May I speak with you outside, Madame?"

"Yes." She whispers and she grabs her shawl and trips after him along a jungly path overlooking the bay.

As they walked they could see that bodies were a'warshing ashore and being drug onto the beach with whaler's harpoons snagged around their belts. The other ship, *The Vantage* listed-to-port in the bay, her sails charred, her rudder fouled, her rigging, drooping, her spars shot up and sorry-like. But she had survived the day and her men had held the beach at dawn.

There was nothing left of *The Cyclone*! She was gone forever now! Both Edith and Chandler took in sharp breaths as they saw what had become of the pirates' final story: of the First Mate, Cindahr, Faerburne, McLean... Some were in shackles, sitting dejected on the beach. Others floated like logs in the bay. A couple were lying on the beach, not moving. For a moment Chandley almost searched for René, but he remembered Captain had posted him on watch with the treasure! In other words - The cook, his loyal friend, had left with the Treasure ship, *The Duck* and had found his fortune as well! Well, Bravo!

The watchers in the woods had, too, watched the ships burn that night and had shuddered and cursed these crazy white men for their insane love of the ugly yellow metal! Yellow was the color of their waste waters and of disease! Yellow stank!

Chandler saw forms lying under black tarps like some form of fallen angels or ghosts of themselves that had once lived and moved and rocked his very world! It was a most climatic ending to his world on board *The Cyclone*. And it was all gone now!

"I can't bear to look, Chandler." Edith wept as she tripped along through the ferns. Some pirates had made it and sat on the sand in hands and necks in fetters under armed guard - a'headed fer the gallows! One of them was Lateen. Others are laying in the sand and having trouble livin'. Corporal Dennison was freely moving about the beach with a musket confidently stuck over his shoulder. Had he turned, once again?

On the beach he could see Captain Jenkin's shiny bald head and his captain epaulets on his shoulders and sword in his belt, he was turning over every dead man, still a'hunting for his prey!

"Soon, I was a'crying too, for, they had all been a part of my whole world for so long, kinda loiked me uncles and godfathers and big brothers and grandfathers, and I was missing and mourning them, standing there, over the cliffs, overlooking their most *dreadful* end!" Shaw's eyes gleamed with tears as he had spoke these words.

"What did you come to tell me, Chandler?" Edith asked a while later, finally, by my side, still crying. I holds 'er hand and then I remembers me mission. We walk on down the path a bit to where I'd put something for her. I finds that isolated spot, where I'd reburied me gold. I tower over her now, meself, and I turns around and puts me hands on her shoulders, sayin':

"Don't ye cry, mum, no more!"

"Look, Chandler, I had a stab at happiness and I didn't realize it until he was gone!" her tears poured down her face in long channels. "I'll never be loved by a man nor have a name! It's too late for me now - I lost my chance! I LOST MY TREASURE!"

'O My Daniel! She'd been so very fortunate to find him, for he was a man of great manners, and ideas, a man of great personal and physical magnetism, and, really, he'd just never been given an honest chance to get away and get ahead in a lawabiding way! Really he'd been tossed to his grave! It was so sharply unfortunate, and she leaned over, stabbed in the belly by her great, great loss; she probably would never recover from it. It was staggering! Now, she told herself that she desired a drink, which would only temporary take this nightmare away!

"But, Madame Edith..."

"I lost it! I lost him! He was a devil, but, I think he was running away from it all!!! A lost soul and I could have helped him, don't you see? I should have been much more - gracious like Captain McKinney!" she cried. "I was always so bloody imperious! I'll never ever learn better, will I!?"

"But, Madame Edith..." he tried to stop her.

"I could have helped him and had myself the honor of a man's name! It's the only thing I ever wanted, Chandler! I am so cursed with my damndable pride, don't you see! I am just cursed as can be!"

She wept and wept and threw herself upon me shoulders. She would not listen nor be consoled, so I holds her a'whoile, and let's her cry it out some saying to meself this is what a man must do, I thinks, but then I tried shaking her from it, again. Foinally I pulls her back by the shoulders firmly and says I:

"Look, mum, ye got it all wrong! Our Captain lives on!"

"What! How can this be! I don't believe how it could be true!! Don't lie to me!!!!" She was hysterical! "Don't you lie to me!! Don't ye lie!"

"He lives on!!" I shook her some, gently, out of her spell. Her long hair fell down from it's bun."

"But the other's... said he fell... and drowned!"

"Well! That's just what they think! But listen to me now! When the ships burned everyone watched it cuz it ware so broight! But I, meself, glambered to the lee and there I peered out into the dark, North part of the bay and I thought I saw Daniel swimming off, with his hat in hand and swim in the waves far over to a whale boat!"

"A second whale boat! Whose whale boat?" she was heaving, "We had moored the only whale boat one on the beach!" She was so relieved. She plopped right down in the dirt and was rubbing her head.

"I had me trump caerd:" and Oy played it well fer her:

"Madam, Cap'n Janvier was on this island last night! I saw his ship fer meself!" I said, sitting down besides her to comfort her. "And, this morning I saw *The Duck* floy away and over the Horizon!"

"Captain Janvier!!??" she asked dizzily, "Who, in the world, is he!?"

"He's Daniel's friend, mum. Oh! I forget ye nare saw him when we was off Savannah! Don't you remember that we feasted with another ship when we were anchored off Savannah?

"Well, yes, I had heard a loud party with another ship."

"Well, that very ship was none other than *The Duck* and the Captain of her is Captain's best friend, Captain Jean Luc Janvier!"

"He helped him? He was his friend?"

"Yes, Ma'am. He had sailed here before us and had awaited upon us."

"How!?"

"Well, the night ware dark and the Seas most savage and I weren't sure if Cap'n ever made it over to *The Duck*'s whale boat until I found Cap'n's hat by the *empty* treasure trove early this morn!"

And I reached over and finds the hat where I hid it in the clump of ferns and, with some drama, I sticks Cap'n's crumpled ontop me head!"

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!" She cried, recognizing the hat, in the biggest surprise of all! Some of the men on the beach looked up to the bluff. Her face brightened like the peach of the dawn and she laughed and laughed and cried and then laughed some more in huge relief at Chandler's new hat, brushing all the tears away, and she pushed it way down on his brow, comically and laughed and laughed it all away! My, she looked beautiful that day!

Some of the Royal Marines had come forwards on the beach at the sound of her laughter, to gaze at the high bluff now, glancing at each other. Was that the infamous Indians of the Isles? It was a long, wild and wicked laughter, of only the deepest jungles' breath! They searched the high and low jungles all above them for the source of the wild laughter, which seemed to emanate from the volcano itself! And it reminded them that Captain La Fourche was still at large, out there...somewhere! The jungles were laughing at them in there foolishness, for no one could or would ever catch him! Even the jungles knew this, for, the watchers in the woods soon joined her and laughed a'loud too, and all over the island was strange echoing laughter, resounded! It bewitched the crew on the beaches and in the cove and set many a myth rolling that day and to this day, hence, that the island was haunted and the Caribe had the stolen all the gold! *So many tales and verse...of the lost gold and the haunted island's curse!*

"He is free now!" she rejoiced to Chandler, standing up and looking up to the cloud puffs, high above, and telling them, her eyes filling with water, with her arms lifted up in triumph! "He's really gotten away from the impressment of the Royal Navy and, now, from the very pirate crew he had commanded!"

They both still had his jewels under their shirts and she grabbed hers about her neck, and she looked out over the bay and chanted as only a sailor of the Sea would say:

*"I'll go there, I pray!
I'll hold him
Yet another day!"*

Finit

Mary Elizabeth leaned forwards asking him “And your treasure, Captain Chandler, what became of it?”

“That’s be a toime for another tale, Missus Elizabeth.”

“Aren’t you afraid of being arrested now, now that you’ve told us your tale?”

The pirate just smiled his answer. “Ma’am, I’m just a sailor a’tellin’ tailes!” And his smile grew wide, for there were bouilloins behind his coal black eyes, and ingots and encrusted glimmering jewels shimmered there in the candlelight. His treasures were these tales of his grand, world-wide and wind-swept adventures, told by a man that had lived a full and untamed life as we can only dare to imagine!

Climatically enjoying himself the Captain Chandler leaned back to finish off his long tale:

“After weeks of treasure hunting and of careening and extensive repairs on *The Vantage*, Captain Jenkins finoily sailed us back to Bristol, and, where they made Captain McKinney, Lawrence, Edith and I the star witnesses of the big trial of the captured pirates: Cindahr, Faerburne, Lateen, et all.”

“And, what happened to them?”

“Ah! They were all hung at the gallows! More than twenty! Dead!”

“Oh!” They cried, shocked at the final outcome of men they had come to know in Shaw’s long story. It was justice, of course, but back then, one could be transported to the colonies for stealing a loaf of bread! But, it was a most terrible fate for those whom took up a dastardly trade! They now faced an eternity, having only their own dark piractical deeds to accompany their souls from thence on! No gold for their eternal souls’ worth.

The folks around the table appeared shocked, so Shaw changed the subject:

“But, I ware to meet the lovely woife of Captain McKinney in Bristol.”

“So, she waited for him all those years?” Asked Miss Wilton.

“Aye, she daid!” He said nodding his head. “All those years! *Looooooove!* After the trial they took me in thar house in Bristol, and helped me git a banker, Lord Llewelyn, to buy me jewels. I then enrolled in me own schoolin’, and from there I eventually went on to become third mate on a ship fer meself! In this li’ol story I had gone from cabin boy to third mate! A Third Mate! After that I eventually became captain of me own ship!”

“The Captain had really helped you!”

“Both Captains!” he said raising his glass to them, swallowing deeply, in gratitude. “They both helped me moooch!”

“Oh and Captain McKinney acquired his own import company after that! Well, it seems that, though he wouldn’t touch blood money, Missoos Sadie McKinney seemed to ‘ave no qualms aboot that ‘erself! She grabbed that thare necklace and, through agents, bought that company outright with it, saying that she ware deproived of ‘er ‘usband too meny yars and that twas ‘er payback! And I ‘eard Captain McKinney never went to Sea again! She ne’er would let ‘im go!”

They laughed warmly, for the goodly Captain had prevailed to the end, and was rewarded with a prosperous life in return which was provided by the jewels from none other than Captain La Fourche, himself!

"And Edith?" asked Mary Elizabeth.

"She discreetly set sail for New Orleans, a few weeks after the trial, on the bark *Gallant*."

"Did she ever find him?"

Captain Chandler smiled broadly, as if he really did know the rest of the story, but that was one jewel he kept for himself and, leaning back in his chair, he relished his secret and shook his head "No I'm not gonna tell ye that'un!"

"Ah! Tell us!" Jeb wined. "Whoy not?"

"You won't tell us more?" Mary Elizabeth asked.

He shook his head, smiling. "Well... Not just yet."

"Wow, what a story!" she said, sitting back in her chair now and smiling. "It has a bit of *romance* about it, Captain Chandler!"

"Ha! Cap'n La Fourche would be jest a'laughing at you fer saying that weird 'romance' Madame!" he laughed heartily at her. "He'd be jest be a'laughing he's head off!"

And then they all laughed at the idea for a moment, feeling as if they had gotten to know the great Captain La Fourche for themselves. And, yes, he would have laughed to hear his own story told in such romantic style. And then they wondered of him, in awe:

"Speaking of the Captain. What ever became of him?" Mary Elizabeth asked.

Leaning back in the pub, enjoying himself most highly, his face flushed in victory he sat up and he said "I'm a full-grown man now so I daresay:

'The Captain Got Away!'

"Other than I, not one white soul had known of *The Duck* being moored on the other side of the island! So, at the inquest they ruled Captain La Fourche a dead man, mates, and Captain Jenkins got his bars of gold, and became a rich man, although, they say that he never stopped a'looking for his prey! Forsooth! He still sails on!"

"But they nare found the body of Captain La Fourche!! I've known all the rest of me loife and I ne'er told another soul other than Edith and Captain McKinney. I've kept me secret all these years - and - until this very day!"

It was silent, for once, in the pub, for all were amazed at the climatic and real ending of *The Cyclone*! It was that Captain La Fourche had, indeed, been so very victorious and yet he had left that all behind to come back ashore! His was a real return to civilization that had clinched all of their very hearts in the end! He had come home!

"And you Mr. Shaw?" asked Miss Wilton. "Did you come back ashore as your Captain had?"

He smiled in rich self-indugence and said as he looked over to the pretty Miss Wilton, "Me Lady, there's hope for me yet!" And some wondered why did men always seem to seek redemption in women? But, alas, perhaps this had meant that he'd come

back in as well?

So, would there be any more pirate stories with overriding, dark-haired villains like our Captain La Fourche to haunt the Colonies? Would their life become dull as a patch of doldrums in the southern latitudes? But once there was a time when the pirates had menaced the coast as much as an oncoming hurricane: The ceiling lowered. The barometer fell. The lighting lit the entire sky and then thunder boomed mighty cannons that could be felt and heard from horizon to horizon, while winds howled like hordes millions of mad marauders invading their land. Yes, Captain La Fourche and his fleet had been bigger than they, themselves alone and he had been something to be reckoned with his power to threaten the Virginian and Carolinian Coastline all the way down through, Georgia, Florida and then into the Caribbean Sea.

But, most folks were glad that he'd finally found his way out of the pirates' life, and that he had succeeded in the back bayous South of New Orleans; for surely, it must be *his* name that they bear to this day:

Bayou La Fourche,
La Fourche Parish,
Port Fourchon, Louisiana, and later
Belle Fourche, South Dakota

And we'll always say his name with a kind of awe, while wondering of where he was, out there, somewhere in the back country of the New World. What had become of him, we might never know, but hopefully he's at peace which he hadn't known since the first day he was enslaved into piracy. He would always be known, in the immortal words of Captain Samuel Bellamy, as 'His own free prince.'

"Fair Winds, Captain La Fourche!"

Based on the handwritten
Oral History Archives:
*'True Tales Told
In the Seaman's Hall'*
Taverna Blanca,
Charleston, 1706

Author Bio



Underweigh on the 160' schooner Bill of Rights out of San Diego, California

A Life of the Sea

The author has a life of the Sea and the writing of it. She did a tour as an AG2 - Aerographer's Mate in the US Navy. After getting out, her family moved to Europe and lived for years right next to a North Sea Port where The Cutty Sark Tallship Races and Sea Festivals were annually held in Bremerhaven, Germany, where Seafaring was cherished and valued and where a writer of the Sea can experience lush seafaring traditions. She returned to the States and after many years, spent on obtaining a degree and then driving all over US and Canada, visiting many ships as she did so, and writing all along. She finally returned to the Sea and worked in the US Navy Ship yards of San Diego, working on nearly every ship in the fleet and in her off time where she could be a part of real sail crews (*Bill of Rights*) and she lived close by, again, to Tall Ship Seafaring, the great *Star of India* was blocks from her place she volunteered on her as well.

Since before she even went in the Navy, she wrote with vision and focus: "to bring back the classical Seafaring traditions including fixing, sailing; and, of course, 'pulling yarns' like Stevenson or Defoe, or, say, a *First Class* on the midwatch of a *DDG* underway..."

Books:

The Dark Lords of the Sea
WestPac Jack
 The Long Haulers
 Art of Writing Essay Collection

Poem Collections:

Songs Sung of the Maiden Sea
 Echoes of the Winds:
Fantasia Christiania

NOTES:

Personal Vision Statement:

It is very important to have a vision of what I want my writing in general and in this piece to do for me, for I've noted everything that has come to pass in my life so far has mostly been pre-visioned.

And in this piece this is what I want to hear:

"What a consummate and classical, rambunctious and fun pirate tale!. Straight from the Pirates of the Caribbean ride: a whole lot of great fun, adventure worthy of Treasure Island. Stevenson would be proud. Captures the ideal Pirate Story we grew up with without billion dollar special effects! Of Disney, Stevenson and Howard Pyle. Highly readable and fun. A classic and yet a Christian work as well! How rare! Welcome aboard,

Writer M. Seacross to the return of the classic Seatale."

I want to work only as a writer and use all the skills that I've worked so hard for, which I believe are really desired for by the world of readers, like me!!!!!!!!!

On the Big Concept of Pieces

Not only do I want it to be a classical piece, a Seafaring pieces and a picaresque adventure, I do want it to have a big concept that Captain LaFourche, DLF, can be so very big, an emperor of the Seas, a monster, a hurricane. I want him to be huge BUT THEN CHOOSE THE GOOD, and go back down into being a real humble person, disappearing into the black swamps of untamed Louisiana. This makes P8 have a big concept for God, the turning and transformation of a man who has it all- great power and wealth, but who turns away. Its StPaul on the road to Damascus, its David before Goliath. And of course it's a God-loving bourne book from the inception and this just makes it all the more Christian while increasing vision and, gosh, readability.

Newly gained appreciation for narration in GWTW has given my more hope to accomplish this increased vision and capacity for story, while keeping the picaresque action and merriment quite there.

At 4-26-15 still little research done, except to go to renaissance festival twice and the Dread Crew Phenomenon is my research too. So little actual reading but finding the Dread Crew to have same vision (except for the honoring of God) and really the Dread was all the research I needed, only doing more for maximum story impact of my first work.

Final Edits Completed:

Page

243,242